"Where there is no vision the people perish"

THE POETRY REVIEW

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THE SNOWFLAKES

BRYAN GUINNESS
(Lord Moyne)

To E.

The wink of the water I see through my window;
The foal in the field, for the first time on legs;
The chirruping children that chase one another,
Balanced on bicycles under the beech trees;
The branches that break into brightness,
And spread in a spray that whispers of spring
Over the deep delight of the distance,
The hyacinthine haze of the hills;
The presence half perceived through the mirror's reflexion
Of herself looking over the lawn;
Half heard, as she hesitates
To fetch the foal or the children to feed;
These shining threads are thrown
Are shot on my shifting shuttle,
Through a tapestry without end, without edges.

These flashing moments may be so metaphored
May be fitted to such a framework of fancy
May be philosophized in phrases more metaphysical;
But chords are not caught by comparisons,
Nor is shining shed by shadows.

And now, the year advancing, the yellow of the dandelions must yield
To your brighter brilliance on the bank of green
Where, lapped in golden light, you lie,
Outshining the spangles of the petals with the splendour
Of your printed dress, the precision of its pattern
Cusped with the spirals of curling creation
Figured with tendrils, refulgent with flowers.

Then, in a twinkling of days the departing dandelions
Are clocks for the children, that count as they scatter
Those grey beards with their breath against the breeze,
And I catch at the call of the cuckoo,
A sequence of summers in that sweet repetition.

Like a curving blade of Damascus,
  The thin moon cuts the sky,
Below the untouched tenderness
  Of the untiring night,
That from her spangled coat of constellations
  Spills out a hint of silver
Into the darkness underneath,
  Until the blundering day
Drives out the starlight,
  But discloses the daisies.

The apple trees raise up the brilliance
  Upon branches apparelled in brightness;
The lolling chestnuts hold it aloft
  In flowery deliberation;
As one night succeeds to another
  The scimitar's circle is widened,
Flashing at each new phase
  A further reflexion of silver,
To haunt the hawthorn
  Of the hedges,
Till, morning, noon and night,
  The May is hung with moonshine.

This twirling of patterns,
  This tumult of images
Cast by the spinning cage,
  In which we cackle of freedom,
Down on us denizens dwelling
  Under bars of disaster unseen,
Is suspect to the analyst
  Who smells out subjectivity;
How can the night spread stars, he says,
  Be tender, touched or tired?
What has the distant moon to do
  With dangling or Damascus?
How the devil can the day make blunders,
  And starlight be driven about?
Ha, he says, you sink in fallacy,
  Indulging in excessive sympathy;
Attributing your feelings to the trees,
  You loll yourself at your deliberate ease.
Sticks and stones, he says,
  Can have no stomach
For all this rubbish that runs
  Out of the rills of your glands.

But I must paint my pictures
  Upon the prison floor,
That Mappin Terrace where we take
  Our natural exercise,
And, like my forbears, I must make
  Friends with the Man in the Moon.
Who has not fancied a form
  In a cloak flung over a chair?
Or feared some huddled phantom
  In the flapping folds of a curtain?
Or found a figure where the artist
  Has fought all life away?

Or, hearing music,
Seen silence?

And so you slither, says the analyst, among selfish illusions
That serve to illumine your ludicrous libido,
But could be corrected by your intellect.

But this twirling of patterns,
This tumult of images,
Stirs the stuff of our existence,
Gives the twist to our touch
By which we thumb things
Into thoughts;
Wisdom is wider than knowledge
And we and the world are wedded
By this tumult of images
This twirling of patterns.

Wandering Westward,
I wonder to see again
The greenness of the Western grass,
The blackness of the Western ground,
The golden bushes ablaze
Of the abounding whins;
To hear the long fury
Of the larks in the leaden sky;
To tread this bright carpet
Stitched with milkwort and tormentil;
To walk again among the flying flowers
Of the yellow flags;
To feel the old fancies
Of the fantastic hilltops:
Monstrous Muckish,
Backed like a mischievous pig,
Twin Aghla, soft in defiance,
Provoking the assuaging rain,
Slieve Snacht
Of the snowy stones,
And the cold indifference carved
On the lofty corner of Errigal.

I carry this tumult of patterns
Eastwards over the sea,
Eastwards into the night,
While the sun settles down in a flare,
Eastwards into the train
Where my luggage is stacked in the rack,
I carry this tumult of patterns
Tightly strapped on to my back,
Eastwards through mountains of Wales,

Where we wandered before our wedding,
Where we rode betrothed
As we wove
Threads in this twirling of patterns
Tightly twisted about me.

I carry this twisting of patterns
Under a whirring of tractors,
As hay-time and harvest beat
Through the pulsing heat of the year,
Pitching the hay with my prong
On to the rising spikes
While my mind is on Puglo the pony
That pulled as he turned in a ring,
And a throng of glowing threshers
That is threaded through my thinking
In a straw-hatted tangle
Of Pissaro's twining.

This twirling of the tendrils in the sweetness of the peas,
Is twisted by the touch of my fingers, that twang
Among sticks stretching upwards, like strings
Of a harp that spills only a music of flowers.
There is need for the nipping of tendrils, for the fastening of stems
With rings to restrain their serpentine writhing
(As they wreathe around their being, as memories the mind,
As memories my mind, of how you taught me
These scented scales of consolation
In that summer after sorrows, in that sunshine after war;
And of how one morning I played
Picking and plucking among dewy petals
In the early brilliance
In the brightness of that birthday)
And so I can fancy my fingers to play in the fragrant fugue
With the long lines of the hollyhocks,
The snarling sneer of the thick-lipped snapdragons,
And the lilies that glisten and lean in their candour.
These are themes, are threads of this counterpoint
That is a theme, a thread in the twist of my thinking
That is a theme, a thread in the tapestry without edges.

And now for the Gaudy gathering
To Oxford I go,
Lifting a student from Norway
Strolling to Stratford-on-Avon.
His pack on his back
And careless of shelter,
Uncertain if he seeks
For the sounding of verses,
Or for bright eyes from Finland

He follows to Bidford.
We drive through desolate Harwell
And find no delight there,
But rather rejoice in the rows
Of the cherry trees growing beyond;
And soon in Bagley wood I seem to see
The scholar gipsy's hat of antique shape.

Great Tom clangs out the time
As I return;
From under his belly in billowing gowns
Issues a bevy of doctors;
In scarlet hoods they hurry along,
Hiccoughing crumbs as they go,
From the delicate sandwiches served in the quad,
To celebrate the encaenia.
The timeless intricacies of Founders' Prayers
Recall my bygone truantry;
The honeyed organ, the harmonious choir
Heap the cathedral high with lumps of sound.

The witty paper in the Chapter House evokes approving nods
To hear the young be brilliant as before;
In our patent leather pumps we splash through the puddles
In this rain that bespatters the starch of our stomachers.
The fountain of fan-tracery's a refuge from the weather.
"Do I know you?" "No, you don't."
"Thank God for that."
"Don't I seem to see
A certain lateral expansion?"
"I'd like to point out you're as bald as a coot;
But we're in the same boat."

And now in a clatter of fork upon platter
Our thoughts are dissolved into chitter and chatter.
The sum of wisdom seems to lurk
In the philosopher beside me;
Interrupted by the strawberries
It evades me still.
The gathering breaks up
Into beer and buffoonery.
Persistently the moon presides
Among clouds over Peckwater,
Washing masonry and men
With inanimate mercy.

The summer has slipped, has wandered away,
That walked beside us as we went,
Tracing the road of the drovers,
Treading the sun-kissed stones
As the pass winds over the tarbet,

Or embarking under the myrtle
Over Loch Morar to Meoble,
—The summer that gleamed brown as amber
In the burns beside the Stance
Where you cuddled as you grew
With ankles in the gold,
—The summer that watched as we waited
By the wildness of the Awe
Dreaming of wavering salmon
In the far faint world below the waters.
And now, as we return, the ripening beech trees
Are rich with the autumn:
The children, balanced on bicycles
Blow with the leaves in the wind:
While still the tumult of images
Tosses and turns in my head.

The dancing dervishes of Damascus
Twirl tirelessly in a courtyard.
Before them come porters and pedlars who pant
Under the desperate drum;
Then, with deliberate steps, the dervishes turn,
Till, their robes rising round them in rings,
They twist like whizzing tops
Over slow recalcitrant feet,
Cutting the air as they whirl
With the delicate curve of their hands,
And, with tilted heads caught up
On invisible ecstasy,
Spin, in conical hats
Their spirals of suspense.

These tremulous tatters,
This tumult of leaves,
Are brought by the breeze
That buffets and scatters,
Are brought by the breeze
That breaks through the trees,
And tears into tatters
Their mantle of leaves,
Outfashioned, faded, flung away
Since it clung up aloft
While we loitered and lay
In the lolling deliberate
Languor of May.

As these tremulous leaves
This tumult of patterns
Are no sooner shattered
And spilt by the breeze,

Are no sooner scattered
  Like suds from the seas,
Than the buffeting breeze
  Brings a new set of patterns,
So the shining moments mingle and move,
Whisked by the whirling
  Whispers above
Of the long insatiable
  Breathing of love.

In this tattered autumn
  I tether twin calves,
Groping after grazing
  Beneath the golden glamour
That rustles in the trees
  And haunts the ground.
We feed along footpaths
  We followed in spring,
Describing new circles
  Across the close clover,
Describing new circles
  To cover the corners
Of the long moist pasture
  Their munching has missed.
From each new mouthful of foggage
  I feel a reflected delight.
Felicity and Charity
  Surround my eccentricity,
Flinging her collar free from my fingers
  Felicity flees me;
Dragging her chain in despite of my chiding
  Charity charges.
I toil in a tangle
  Of tethers and hammer,
Till they come up to catch
  At the edge of my coat,
And, leaping along with me,
  Follow my lead.

This light that illumines the fields of the autumn
Sheds its pale golden shafts between the long shadows,
Across the last succulence before the cold,
Over the darkness of cattle that creep
  With their heads caught into the hillside;
Sheds its wide golden shafts between the long shadows
That lie beneath the lassitude of elms beyond the Liffey,
As they loll in the last loveliness of their leafiness,
Along banks, along hedges that were lit
With the morning moonshine of the May.

My twin calves tethered, I turn to my bonfire
Fetching to feed it a fuel of sticks
Cut and carried to clear
  An incoherence of branches
From the face of the distance
  From the presence of the hills.

The hissing whisper of the postman's wheels
  Whirls me from distant sleep;
Their splash perplexes me
  And points a new direction of the day:
Drums out a dance of shifting doors and windows
  And finds my feet across a different room:
Makes me aware of Wiltshire
  And of winter in the trees:
Tells of the intricate
  Twisting of patterns,
Stitched together by the scarlet van
  That slips by starts from door to door,
With lamps that glimmer faintly
  Under the looming daylight;
Evokes the fitfulness of fog and frost
  And fires and friendliness
And letters, folded criss-cross at the back
  That gladden here and there a lonely girl,
While others disappointed peep from doorways
  Or sadly peer through curtains unperceived.

This whiteness I whisk, while the curious children
Chirrup and chatter, as they chase
From bedside to basin with banter of riddles,
Is a bristling beard, that is frothing of bubbles.

This coolness of the air, this coldness of the morning
  Comes suddenly to meet me as I clang the sounding door;
Has a tang of remembered hills that stand
  Snow-capped under the stars.

Now, like that fiery bird, the year must flare
  Her circling flight fulfilled;
Now comes the Christmas, reddening the holly;
  Now call the lowing cows from lamplit sheds;
And now, with tails like fountains, there scamper the fillies
  Over the silver field, to feed on the golden fodder;
Raking the ashes of yesterday's bonfire, I rouse up the embers
  Fling on the faggots, and admire the flame.

Then down the early dimness of the winter's day
  Shines out, as I return, the glory of your windows
That frame these children's faces, fixed
  By this first falling of snowflakes.

UNREST

RACHEL ANNAND TAYLOR

Whoever has created some small thing,
  Figurine, viol-theme, or villanelle,
Must keep on carving, versing, violing,
  Or suffer some distress too vague to tell.
From living matter has his hand or heart
  Dabbled one Form, dreamy and casual?—
He has signed away his soul to the Daimon of Art:
  Unrest shall haunt him, fast or festival.
Ah! Would that fragile frivolous soul forswear
  The witless pact?—Enough to be alive?
He would walk with dancing feet in sunbright air,
  Simply delighting in the senses five?—
He shall not slip, though much red wine be spilt,
The dull deadweight of the deserter's guilt.

FOLLOW, FOLLOW CRIES THE WIND

WILFRID GIBSON

"Follow, follow!" cries the wind,
As it hurries through the hollow—
"Follow, follow, follow me
Down the valley to the sea—
Follow, follow!

"Quit the house of rigid stone
Where you've dwelt so long alone,
And set out with me to ride
Over the adventurous tide—

"Board the boat; and with my breath
Let me swell the sails, and bear you
Buoyantly
Through a life that's worth the living
While you brave the deeps that dare you,
Fearlessly defying death!

"Follow, follow!" cries the wind,
As it hurries through the hollow—
"Follow, follow, follow me
Down the valley to the sea—
Follow, follow!"

LAMENT FOR A TROUBADOUR

(Rev. Patrick Kevin O'Horan, author of "Roadways of the Heart", etc. *Ob.* June 4th, 1951, ann. act. 48.)

CHARLES WHITBY

Friend of my heart, I learnt from your sad last letter
How you vainly longed for a chance to visit me here,
But fondly assuming that things must change for the better
I missed the new portent of your shuddering fear!

Never again will my opening door endow me
With your glad smile and the clasp of your hand in mine,
Never again on Earth will the gods allow me
A full flagon to quaff of your friendship's wine

No more genial sorties into spellbound sweating
Of bellicose minstrels' crude capers,
No more lyric escapades of bewitching phantasy—
No dim hushful guides with 'pale tapers'!

No more snatched interludes, because the dawn was bright,
For coffee in Fortt's busy forenoon crush,
Quizzing toffs and lovelies with unenvying delight,
Then parting with a cheery rush

No more sweet communion on Priddy's antique road
Where wonderously our veiled souls were bared,
And at each heart's deep centre the same radiance glowed,
The same high allegiance both shared.

Yes, Padraig, I confess it was but as for a moment,
You left me to trace out alone Earth's devious rôle:
I may catch from afar now and then your bright brief comment
But on some ecstatic star we shall meet soul and face to face and soul.

THOMAS HARDY

GILBERT THOMAS

Sombre as dusk on Egdon to his sight
Was our sad world's inexorable fate.
His groping mind saw but the prison gate
That closed on Tess. For him the dynasts' might
Was some drowsed Knitter's, making tangled plight
Of human threads. Yet so compassionate
Was his own core that, when disconsolate,
It is to him I turn for cheer and light.

If brain and spirit separately dwell,
Which holds of vital faith the inner part?
Give me the sceptic head—and the quick heart:
Of loving-kindness his warm overflow
Who still, denying Christmas miracle,
Went through the gloom "hoping it might be so."

PERCEPT AND OBJECT

SIR G. ROSTREVOR HAMILTON

A cab-horse—broken down—this object may appear
To you: you may be right, a cab-horse may be there.
But I a Unicorn with eyes of pure gold see,
And if it isn't there, it damned well ought to be.

POSSIBLE DEATH

WREY GARDINER

Shall we die to the notes of a harpsichord,
Flute or drum, or the bitter words
Of the damned poet, or the sound of the unquiet sea?

Shall we die when the hour of the opiate dream
Swings into reality with the glow of real time,
The wonder of flesh and the vision of beauty?

The slow fire of the penetration of the world
Dies like a magnificent curtain
Over the desert of the negation of truth.

We have forgotten the secret of vision,
The path through the dark wood of all our dreams
That we fling like a coat of gold over the barbarity of the day.

FACE IN THE MIRROR

ROBERT GREACEN

Face in the mirror, don't tell me your name,
Don't even tell me the way you came
(Without my permission) or if you've been true
To the dreams of youth. To one or two?
Can I look at this face without a twinge of shame?

Face in the mirror, remember your pledge?
Romantic temper allied to a classic edge;
To chisel out the crystal line,
And make it strong—not to refine;
To clip but not to maim the living hedge.

Face in the mirror, a journey still to go,
Towards the final winter snow,
I shall go with you where you will,
If only courage pay the mounting bill.
Face in the mirror answer yes or no

To the pull of your history. Atone,
Then go your chosen way alone.

IN THE WINGS

JOHN WALLER

"Life's but a masquerade"
Cried clown to gay dancer;
"Death cheats all dancing years"
Was Harlequin's answer.

YOUNGER POETS*

JOHN BAYLISS

Where are the younger poets?—Growing old
With toeing lines and moving clumsy feet
Across the pavements of a world gone cold,
Like lonely policemen on a dangerous beat;
Or like obedient clerks who know their age
Long past retirement, and can see the end,
Born for oblivion or the stiff blank page
To die in dingy suburb without friend.

And yet not all, unmindful of their doom,
Crawl to the sullen cradle of the dark,—
Some may be found, loud voice in little room,
Who still contrive to make, or cause, remark,
And these have found the elixir of Youth,—
An adolescent mind,—no more, in truth.

LOS POETAS MAS JOVENES

Translated into Spanish by PATRICIO GANNON

Donde están los más jovenes? ya más viejos, sin brío
Alineando renglones, con marcha entorpecida,
cruzando pavimientos en un mundo ya frío,
solitarios "policemen" en riesgosa batida.

Oficinistas fieles que saben que han pasado
con holgura las fechas de sus jubilaciones;
que el olvido o la página blanca han afrontado
o muerte sin amigos en sórdidos rincones.

No todos, sin embargo, fieles a su destino,
regresan a los senos adustos de la sombra,
todavía hay algunos cuya voz es un trino
que en pequeños ambientes repercute o asombra:
la fuente de juvencia, encuentran ciertamente,
al exhibir tan solo, mentes de adolescente.

* *The Poetry Review* is honoured to record this recent translation by a distinguished Argentine visitor to the Society. Señor Gannon, on his return to Buenos Aires, is publishing works on *The Rhymers Club* and *Aubrey Beardsley*.

MEDITERRANEAN NIGHT

SUSANNE KNOWLES

The fountain pours all night upon the quay
Cool slender water from the lion's mask,
The dappling sound is constant to my thought:
Now interrupted by a thirsty flask
Or by some cupped, half-careless fingers caught,
Now suffering the quenching of the sea;
I hear the creak of oars beyond my sight,
The water dripping from the turning blade,
And lose myself in long tranquillity.
Too exquisite for sleep is such a night:
Drunk is my spirit with this sensual shade,
The cloak and comfort of the garlic day.

Familiar as my hand's geography
These valleys are, these hills I know by heart:
The goat-paths where, a longlegged child, I raced
For the first orchis or anemone;
Sprawled in the shade of some cool olive tree
Or among hot, bruised, aromatic plants,
And heard a village, level with my ears,
Give out, remote, unheeded time that slants
Down with the cypress shadows and the sun,
Then from the valley church clocks one by one
Chime rival hours; the quiet valley whence
Rose up the sudden rumour, clear but far
Of barking dog or casual guitar.

What lovely shapes spring from this classic soil
Where restless demi-gods and heroes trod,
Loved, warred or found divinity's eclipse
Within the wine-cup's passionate ellipse:
The solemn fig, hermaphrodite of fruit,
The flesh and flower, the male and female one,
From whose pale tree the labourer once wrought
Priapus' likeness, lusty garden god;
Pumpkins at ease upon the basking roof
Whose flowers, the very colour of the sun,
Are sold in bunches in the market place,
Ever-pursuing bees still at their throats:

Not for their idle brilliance are they sought
But to be baked, crammed tight with chosen herbs.
Absolute beauty here lies close with use,
Curving, not immanent in marble breast,
But in the wave-round sides of fishing-boats
Great with sea-promise, or a cask of oil.

Most beautiful all these: more lovely yet
The patriarchal pattern of the vine
That runs through centuries of sun and toil,
Threads terraces, and from the eaves above
The threshold where the evening meal is set
Leans with its pagan leaves towards the love
Implicit in the common bread and wine.

THUNDER STORM

OOHNA SANDHAM

Steel and
Sharpened Knives.

Mountain crag, and river torrent thundering;
Granite castle; time-encrusted tomb;
Orchestras of Heaven and Hell unfolding:
Strength and darkness, ecstasy and gloom.

Blades, and
Metal Swords.

Strong, unknown, entangled hearts' emotions;
Brutal love; deep fear, and wild beasts' roar;
Hollow echoes; deep, unfounded chasms:
Heavy wildness, height and depth and power.

Scythes, and
Oft-used Sickles.

Distant ramparts; shouts of fallen giants;
Breakers rolling, lifting; waterfalls;
Moonlit domes; placated lovers' heartbeats;
Tired musicians; crumbling castle walls.

THREE PROSE POEMS

JOHN STEWART COLLIS

I. APOSTROPHE TO THE MUSE.

Leave me alone, Muse! Let me enjoy things for once without having to put it down on paper. When, after this rainy day, I see a sudden break in the sky behind the hill, like an announcement of the reign of peace, its beams throwing to the sea a light not laid upon the land, and kindling on the fields what shines not from the waves—don't make me have to say it, Muse, leave me alone. When I pass over the hill and see a copse below looking like a pair of trousers, let me fail to observe the similitude, and merely see the wood because of the trees. When I look down across the bulging pastures many of them shaped exactly like enormous beautifully made beds with green sheets, don't make me have to do anything about it. Muse, let me simply enjoy what I see. When a great flock of starlings gives the impression of a flying carpet, or when a squirrel runs up a tree beside me with the same ease as I run down a hill on a bicycle, for heaven's sake don't insist upon my taking a note of this. Let me off. Leave me alone, Muse!

II. THE CLOUD

I got off my bicycle and stared at it. It would last five minutes at most, then it would be gone and not be seen any more. It had never been before, it would never be again, its existence five minutes. Such is the difference between what we see in the heavens and what we see on earth. We call the hills everlasting. In our lifetime anyway they are always there. We grow up, we go away, we find all things inconstant, we become maddened by the filthy rags of change and decay that drape the skeletons of hope and joy. We return to the mountains. All is the same. They are constant. And so great is the virtue in that constancy that as we sit there, many years and many stains are wiped away from our hearts.

But see those mountainous places in the sky, such shape, such style, such radiant happiness and promise that if only they belonged to land we could reach them and there sit down in everlasting joy! Alas, they are no more substantial than visions of better days. They are held aloft for a bare five minutes. They are never painted. Maybe sometimes no man sees them. Perhaps I alone saw this one from the Dorset ridge. It was evening but not yet sunset. A cloud, black as ink, shaped like a gigantic map of England, screened the sun, and its rims were bright with a whiteness more radiant than snow. Thus was the mighty map margined by blazing silver shores. In a few moments the picture was taken down. It would never be exhibited again.

III. NORMANDY: 1944

Going outside the cottage in Dorset and looking up into the clear June

night, I saw that the Fixed Stars had unleashed their moorings and that the Milky Way was advancing in my direction. Soon they were very near in the form of vast droves of birds such as were never seen since the world was young. They were flying low, each with a red, an amber, and a green light. For an hour they passed making for the coast. Some went directly overhead as I stood in the garden. Their wings were blacker than the darkness, and their lights made them so actual that I could not doubt my senses nor think that they had been conjured out of the darkest Africa of my mind. They spread across the length of the sky in streams—illuminated rivers flowing in the air.

So this was the historic hour when Might against Might should meet in the last deadly embrace. Historic occasions are often only seen as such afterwards, the Great Moment passing unnoticed. It was not so this time. The sky had thundered, the earth had shaken, the heavens had been filled with our own flying stars, on this Night, the night which like an answer to a dying man's cry for help, had come at last.

Next morning I walked down the hill towards the lovely village below. A twenty mile sweep of landscape, glowing with the beam and the bloom of risen grass and rising corn. Above – the old fantastic tale of castles and estates of cloud, the mountains and the maps of mist margined in a wide expanse of blue. You know the scene, you know the day—the day, the scene dreamt of by the weary wanderer in the foreign land. But it was only the framework, the stage-scenery of the moving picture I was about to see. I had witnessed this kind of film many times before, of course, but never so elaborately produced.

Working its way through a thin scarf of cloud, very far and high above, a white bird appeared, vanished, and then appeared again. It was followed by many more. They were reflecting light, and blazed brighter than ever a sun-caught piece of silver shone. And so they sailed in poised formation out across the void of blue. Another company suddenly came out from behind another mass of mist, also caught by the upward beating beams of light. As I walked down the hill a vast skyscape was spread before me gloriously englamoured by the unspeakable promise and brightness of the morning, arrayed with all the signs and answers of beauty which is the flag of truth. And precisely up there, in that place, I saw hundreds of the winged chariots weaving their way in and out of the whispy scarves, and amazingly appearing from behind this great rock or that long mountain-side of cloud. . . . The more I gazed the more my spirits rose. I did not seek to pierce the paradox of their existence, nor ask what else they were than liberators of the groaning lands; for what I saw was beauty framed by beauty, art enscrolled by nature, triumph the most complete—the winged Thoughts of man shaped in ships above the land, disdainful of the bonds that tied him down to earth!

ON THE FUNCTION OF THE POET

(Speech delivered at a ceremonial meeting on the 84th anniversary of Pushkin's death).

By ALEXANDER BLOK (1880-1921)
Translated by A. L. MILLER

Even from our childhood years, we cherish in memory a cheering name: Pushkin. It is a name which occupies our thoughts for many of our living days. The names of emperors, of generals, of in entors of lethal weapons, of life's tormentors and of life's tormented, are sinister sounds in our ears. And along with these, the gentle name of Pushkin.

Pushkin succeeded in bearing the burden of his creative genius quite easily and cheerfully, although the rôle of poet is neither easy nor cheerful. It is tragic. Like a great master, Pushkin moved grandly, confidently, and fully at ease in his part. And yet we are often moved to tears when we think of Pushkin, and of the festive and triumphant progress of this poet who could not interfere with the world outside because his was an inner, a cultural task. It was a progress to be interrupted only too often by the surly intervention of people to whom a cooking-pot meant more than God.

We know of Pushkin the man, Pushkin the friend of the monarchy, Pushkin the associate of the Decembrists. All these pale into insignificance before Pushkin the poet.

The poet's importance never diminishes. His diction and idiom may become obsolete, but the spirit of his work can never go out of date.

The public is liable to turn its back on the poet and his vocation. To-day it erects monuments in his name; to-morrow it wants to "cast him from the ship of contemporaneity." Both these actions betray the limitations of the public, but not those of the poet. The spirit of poetry, as of all the arts, is eternal. This or that treatment of poetry by outsiders is ultimately of no consequence.

To-day we are honouring the memory of Russia's greatest poet. It seems to me appropriate to discuss the function of the poet, and to substantiate what I am going to say with Pushkin's own ideas on the subject.

What is a poet? A man who writes verse? No, of course he is not. He is not called a poet because he writes verse; he writes verse—that is to say, produces an harmonious arrangement of words and sounds—because he is a poet, a son of harmony.

What is harmony? Harmony is the concord of world forces; it is the order of world life. Order is cosmos, as opposed to disorder, or chaos. The Ancients taught that cosmos, or world, is born out of chaos. Cosmos is akin to chaos, as the resilient waves of an inland sea are akin to the massy billows of the ocean. A son may not resemble his father in any way, save

in one single hidden characteristic; but this alone is enough to guarantee a resemblance between father and son.

Chaos is primeval, elemental anarchy; cosmos is organised harmony, or culture. Cosmos is born out of chaos. The element nurses within itself the seeds of culture. Harmony is created out of anarchy.

World life consists in the continual creation of new varieties, new species. They are rocked in the cradle of anarchical chaos; culture rears them and thins them out; harmony gives them shapes and forms, which dissolve once more into the mists of anarchy. The meaning of this is incomprehensible to us and its true significance obscure. We console ourselves with the thought that the new species is better than the old. But the wind extinguishes this tiny little candle with which we attempt to illuminate the world night. The order of the world is disquieting; it is the legitimate offspring of disorder, and might not conform to our ideas of what is good and what is bad.

One thing we do know: the species which arrives to replace another is new; the one it replaces is old. We observe eternal changes in the world, and ourselves take part in the substitution of species. Our participation is, on the whole, passive; we are born, we grow old, we die; but we are rarely active in the process. We occupy some sort of place in world culture, and assist personally in the formation of new species.

The poet is the son of harmony, and he is given a kind of rôle to play in world culture. Three tasks are assigned to him: first, the liberation of sounds from their natural, anarchical element; second, the production of an harmonious arrangement of these sounds and their embodiment in form; third, the presentation of this harmony to the outside world.

Sounds which have been ravished from their element, arranged into harmony, and presented to the outside world begin to do their own work independently. "A poet's words are the *raison d'être* of his vocation." They reveal unexpected power. They put human hearts to the test and make a selection, as it were, from the slag-heaps of humanity. Perhaps they are re-assembling parts of an old species bearing the name of "man," —parts which are suitable for the creation of new species; for the old one, evidently, rapidly declines, degenerates, and dies.

It is impossible to withstand the power of the harmony which the poet presents to the world. To struggle with it is beyond all human strength, individual and united. "Oh for the time when all might feel the power of harmony thus!" Salieri pines away on his own. But it *is* felt by all, only by mortals otherwise than by god;—or Mozart. When poetry points with its finger and confers a name, that name, like death itself, is unescapable; and it is never bestowed without just cause.

For instance, the poet never stigmatizes those who are simply a piece of the element,—who are neither allowed to understand, nor meant to. People are not called rabble for resembling the soil they plough, the

scrap of mist from which they emerged, or the beast which they hunt. On the other hand, those who do not want to understand (although they ought to understand a great deal, being servants of culture) are stigmatised with the infamous name of the rabble. Even death cannot deliver them from this name. It is one which survives death itself, even as it survived Count Benckendorff, Timovsky, Bulgarin, and all those who prevented the poet from carrying out his mission.

In the unfathomable depths of the spirit, where man ceases to be man, in depths inaccessible to the state and the society created by civilisation, roll waves of sound permeating the universe like the natural processes which form mountains, winds, marine currents, and the vegetable and animal world.

These depths of the spirit are screened off by the phenomena of the outside world. Pushkin says that they are screened off from the poet more, perhaps, than from other people. "Perhaps, amid the world's weak children, he is the weakest of them all."

The first task required of the poet by his office is to quit the "worries of this busy world" in order to lift the outer covering and reveal the depths. This necessity isolates the poet from the company of the "world's weak children."

"Half-wild, half-grim, his spirit harassed
By sounds and dark dismay, he flees
To lonely shores of boundless seas
And to the leafy-murmuring forest."

Wild, grim, harassed by dark dismay, because the revelation of the depths of the spirit is as difficult as the act of giving birth. To the sea and to the forest, because only there in solitude can he summon up all his strength and participate in the "natural chaos", the anarchical element which sets the waves of sound in motion.

The mysterious act has been performed; the covering has been lifted; the depths revealed; the sound received into the soul. The second law of Apollo stipulates that this sound, raised from the depths and still strange to the outside world, should be confined in the abiding and tangible form of words. Sounds and words should form a unified harmony. This belongs to the domain of technical skill. Technical skill needs inspiration just as much as participation in the "native chaos". "Inspiration," said Pushkin, "is that state of the soul in which it is most ready to receive impressions, to consider ideas, and subsequently to organise these impressions and ideas into comprehensible language." It is impossible, therefore, to draw any exact demarcation line between the first and second tasks of the poet. The one is intimately bound up with the other. The more coverings raised, the more intense the participation in chaos, and the more difficult the act of giving birth to sound—the more he strives to achieve clarity of form, and the more

persistent, musical, and unremitting he becomes in his persecution of the human ear.

It is now time for the third task of the poet. The sounds which have been received into the soul and arranged into harmony have to be presented to the outside world. Here occurs the famous conflict of the poet with the rabble.

It is doubtful whether the common folk have ever been called rabble by a poet. Surely only those deserving of the title have applied it to ordinary people. Pushkin collected folk-songs, wrote in the folk style, and had a very intimate friend in his old country nurse. One must therefore be either stupid or malicious to think that Pushkin could have meant the common people when he spoke of the rabble. A Pushkin concordance will clarify this point, should there ever be a re-birth of Russian culture.

By rabble, Pushkin understood approximately what we do. He often qualified this noun with the epithet "high-born", thus conferring a collective noun on that ancestral court aristocracy which had nothing to justify its existence except noble rank. But Pushkin could already see with his own eyes the ancestral nobility being replaced by the bureaucrats. It is these officials with whom we are concerned; these are our rabble; the rabble of yesterday and to-day: not beasts, not clods of clay, not scraps of mist, not bits of the planets, not demons and not angels. Without the addition of the particle "not", there is only one thing to be said of them: they are at least human beings. This is not particularly flattering. Human beings:—vulgar little men of affairs whose spiritual depths are hopelessly and completely screened off by the "cares of the busy world".

The rabble expects the poet to serve that which it serves itself: the outside world. It expects him to be "useful", as Pushkin so simply expresses it. It expects the poet to "sweep the muck off the streets," "enlighten the hearts of his fellow brethren," and the like.

From its own point of view, the rabble is right in its expectations. In the first place, it will never be able to enjoy the fruits of that toil, somewhat more important than sweeping the muck off the streets, which is expected of the poet. Secondly, it instinctively senses that this labour is, in some way or other, going to lead sooner or later to its own downfall. The testing of human hearts with harmony is not a restful occupation; nor is it one which assures a level, and therefore (for the rabble) desirable flow of events in the outside world.

The rabble class, which is no different from any other class of human beings, progresses very slowly. For instance, in spite of the fact that the human brain during the last few centuries has become puffed up to the detriment of all the other bodily organs, the public has only thought of obtaining one single instrument from the state—the censorship—to

protect the order of its world as expressed in state routine procedure. By this means it has placed an obstacle on the third path of the poet only—the path leading to the presentation of harmony to the world. It might occur to it, apparently, to place obstructions on the first and second paths as well. It might investigate means of muddling up the very sources of harmony. What it is that prevents it—slow wittedness, timidity or conscience—we do not know. Could it be that such means are already being investigated?

The vocation of the poet, however, is, as we have seen, quite incommensurable with the outside world. The tasks of the poet are universally cultural, to use a phrase now in common use. His work belongs to history. Consequently, the poet has the right to say with Pushkin:

"I little worry whether the press is free
To rail at fools, or whether the censorship
Restrains the would-be satirist in its grip."

In saying this, Pushkin was maintaining the rabble's right to establish a censorship, for he presumed that the number of fools was not likely to diminish.

It is by no means the poet's business to knock at the door of every fool without exception until it is opened unto him. On the contrary, the harmony created by him selects from amongst the fools in order to obtain something more interesting than the human average from the human slag-heap. This aim is, of course, sooner or later achieved by true harmony. No censorship in the world can hinder this essential function of poetry.

We are not, on a day devoted to the memory of Pushkin, going to dispute whether Pushkin was right or wrong in distinguishing between the liberty which we call personal and the liberty which we call political. We know that he demanded a "different", a "secret" liberty. To us, this means personal liberty; but to the poet it is something more than just personal liberty.

". . . To know your life's your own
By right; to serve and please yourself alone;
Never, for worldly power and rank, to trade
Your conscience, your intentions, or your pride;
To wander at your whimsy, and rejoice
At smiling nature's heaven-sent loveliness,
And to be lost in rapturous contemplation
Before the best of art and inspiration—
That's happiness! That's freedom!"

He said this shortly before his death. In his youth, Pushkin spoke of the very same thing:

"Deep love and *secret liberty*
Breathed to the heart a simple hymn."

This *secret liberty,* this *whimsy*—a word which was to be reiterated afterwards by Fet more loudly than by anybody else ("The crazy whimsies of the bard!")—is not just personal liberty. It is something more than that. It is closely connected with the first two tasks which Apollo requires of the poet. All the things mentioned in Pushkin's lines are conditions essential for the liberation of harmony, and although he allowed interference in his third task, the testing of human hearts with harmony—Pushkin could not allow interference in the first two; and those are not personal ones.

Meanwhile, Pushkin's life, now on its decline, was being more and more impeded by obstacles standing in his way. Pushkin was weakening, and so was the culture of his time—the only cultural epoch in the Russia of the last century. The fatal forties were drawing near. The childlike lisp of Belinsky could be heard over Pushkin's death-bed. To us, this lisp seemed to be saying something utterly contradictory and utterly hostile to the polite voice of Count Benckendorff. It seems so to us even now. It would be only too painful for us if it were otherwise. And even if it is not entirely so, we shall continue to think, all the same, that it is not by any means the case. For the time being, of course:

"To us, one thrilling lie is dearer
Than countless unexciting truths."

In the second half of the century, what has been heard in the childlike lisp of Belinsky was being roared forth by Pisarev at the top of his voice.

I shall refrain from further comparisons, for it is impossible to clarify the picture just now. Perhaps behind the web of time will be revealed something quite different from what glimmers in my fleeting thoughts, and yet at the same time quite different from what is being maintained by those with viewpoints contrary to my own. We shall have to live through events of some kind or other before then. The final word in this matter is in the hands of the future historian of Russia.

Pushkin died. But "for children, the Posas never die," said Schiller. And Pushkin was killed, not merely by the bullet of D'Anthès, but by want of air as well. And with him, his culture died also.

" 'Tis time, my friend, 'tis time! The weary heart seeks peace!"

This is Pushkin's death-bed sigh; and it is also the death-bed sigh of the culture of Pushkin's age.

"There is no joy on earth, but there is peace and freedom."

Peace and *freedom.* They are essential to the poet in his work of liberating harmony. But peace and freedom can also be taken away. Not eternal peace, but creative peace. Not the child's freedom, not the freedom to play the liberal, but creative freedom, secret liberty. And the poet dies, because there is no air for him to breathe. Life has lost its meaning.

As for those dear officials who hindered the poet from testing human hearts with harmony—they have earned for themselves the name of

rabble for all time. But they only interfered with the poet in the execution of his third task. When Pushkin put human hearts to the test with the whole range of his poetry, he missed them out entirely.

Let them have a care, those officials who intend to direct poetry down a sort of special channel, thus encroaching on its secret liberty and obstructing it in the performance of its mysterious function. They will earn that most despicable of all names—rabble.

We die, but art remains. Its final cause is unknown to us, and cannot be known. It is consubstantial and indivisible.

I would like, for amusement, to utter three simple truths. There are no such things as specialised arts. What has not been acknowledged as art should not be designated as such. In order to create works of art, it is necessary to be able to do so.

In these cheering, commonsense truths, before which we stand so guilty, we can swear by the cheering name of Pushkin.

11*th Feb.*, 1921

★

HOMAGE TO YEATS

J. J. CURLE

I

Whittle and pare away
All half-dishonest thought:
Let only such lines stay
As skill on passion wrought.
The rest is rootless sand
Blown by the wind
About the infertile land
That isolates the mind.

Yeats would have it so;
Truth without device,
Every word a blow,
None struck twice.
Yet the magic is
That the music sings:
A naked Goddess his,
But sheathed in wings.

THE SHAKESPEARE MYSTERY

(PART THREE)

BY HERBERT CORBY

The theory that Shakespeare was the Earl of Oxford is one that started later than the somewhat preposterous Bacon delusion, but is gaining ground among the growing numbers of disbelievers of the orthodox. It is based largely on the assumption that the plays are concerned with contemporary events and that some of the characters have an Elizabethan counterpart (Oxford for instance is Hamlet, Bottom is James I) and that the early poems of Oxford contain lines similar to lines used in the plays. Since the main plots of the plays can hardly be called original it is presumably in the secondary plots that there is the parallel to contemporaneous events, history and incident: and the belief that the plays were written as comments on the events of the day is plausible enough assumption but not strictly capable of positive proof. It could be true in the wide sense that "the man who has seen one green field has seen all green fields" but because one thing is similar to another it is not necessarily copied from it, even when the likeness is remarkable: and here the likenesses are far from that.

The similarity of thought and phrase in the poems of Shakespeare and Oxford is however a matter which the individual reader can decide for himself. When Marlowe writes "Heave up my shoulders when they call me dog" in *The Jew of Malta,* and Shakespeare

> "Still I have borne it with a patient shrug
> For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.
> You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog . . ."

in *The Merchant of Venice,* we do not assume that Marlowe is Shakespeare, but simply that the latter had knowledge of *The Jew of Malta* and an echo of it remained in his memory. Nor, similarly when we find in *The Merchant of Venice* "My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!" do we assume that Shakespeare wrote *The Jew of Malta* with its line "O girl, O gold, O beauty, O my bliss!"

This argument from similarity of phrase is largely fallacious, for surely the truth is that if the parallels are real, and the ideas are exclusively Oxford's and not common to other writers of the time. Shakespeare was at some time able to read Oxford's poems, and remembered them as he did Marlowe's *Jew of Malta.* It is obviously more reasonable to believe the smaller assumption, that Shakespeare read the work of his contemporaries, than the larger one, that one of his contemporaries wrote his plays.

In this Oxford theory "*The Merry Wives of Windsor* can be described

with very little exaggeration as a dramatisation of the rivalry between Oxford and Sir Philip Sidney for the hand of Anne Cecil" writes Percy Allen, who also holds the belief that other writers of the day, Chapman and Jonson in particular were lampooning Shakespeare in their plays, and that such attacks were not on any mere rustic from Stratford, but on the Earl of Oxford, who was symbolised by the boar and star which is a feature of the imagery of their plays. The boar would symbolise Bacon too. The Oxford theory, like the Bacon theory, does not stop at the contention that Oxford was Shakespeare, although it is rather more modest than the other in suggesting that Oxford was only Lyly as well: and like the Baconian theory it has its fair share of cyphers and anagrams, codes and twaddle.

There is some sprinkling of fact that might be evidence. Francis Meres wrote in 1598, in connection with the playwrights of his day, "The best for comedy among us be Edward Earl of Oxford". And in the plays and sonnets there are instances where the wording seems to refer to Oxford, for example in the line from Sonnet 125 "Were it aught to me I held the canopy" is said to refer to the fact that at the British celebration of victory over the Armada, Oxford was one of the two earls who held the canopy over the Queen's head.

The Oxford and Bacon theorists achieve different ends from the same heretical beginnings: indeed the former could be a resurrection of the latter with its more callow and embarrassing features eliminated. Both sets of theorists seem very worried that Shakespeare did not leave his plays to his daughters in his will, overlooking the possibility that the plays were the property of the company for which he wrote, and consequently not his to leave to anyone: and both seem quite concerned that the writer of such great plays caused so little stir on his return to Stratford, successful and famous. But the plays were not considered to be all that outstanding, and even before Shakespeare's retirement to Stratford, the theatre-going public was turning away from his plays and towards the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. It was, after all, the newcomer Fletcher who was called in to add the popular touches to *The Two Noble Kinsmen.*

Both the Bacon and Oxford theories have to do with a counterfeit portrait, the Baconians urging that the Droeshout engraving has two left sleeves to the coat, which proves that the plays were presented to the public in a deceitful manner: and the Oxford faction say that an alleged portrait of Shakespeare has been cleaned and Oxford's dress revealed underneath the covering paint. Furthermore, both sets use the boar as a symbol, they both express belief in codes and cyphers and anagrams, and the protagonists of both seem to consider that Shakespeare appeared miraculously, almost in a flash of light, and that Shakespeare's art was not in the improvement and development of his fellow-playwrights' work, but in suddenly starting to write superlatively in an ignorant world. Nor

for that matter do they seem to appreciate Shakespeare's work, but glory more in the figments of their own fevered imaginations, happy in their leaden souls and earthbound brains.

The outstanding flaw in all this suppositious stuff is that on the showing of the theorists themselves, whoever wrote the plays was compelled to keep his name secret: yet the plays are supposed to be scattered with so many alleged cyphers and allusions that it would appear that the chief aim of the author was to make himself manifest as often as possible in meagre and irresponsible ways.

There are also hypotheses which, admitting the paucity of authenticated fact in Shakespeare's life, recreate the history to fit their own fanciful need. Almost any fictional treatment is adequate here: the attitude merely depends on how the plays affect the theorist concerned. One such theory is outlined in "A Chapter in the Early Life of Shakespeare" by Arthur Gray, where the suggestion is made that Shakespeare left Stratford when quite young, most likely to become a page in the household of Henry Goodere of Polesworth in the north of Warwickshire. It is argued that Shakespeare uses the north Warwickshire background for his plays and never takes one of his characters to Stratford, however close they are to that town. In fact he never mentions Stratford: and Stratford people were indifferent to him when he returned to brood about his property, his debtors and his will. It is noted too that there is the recurrent presence of pages, who behave with the right mixture of deference and assurance. It will be observed on this somewhat tenuous reasoning that since Shakespeare was the father of twins, and twins appear in the plays Shakespeare must have written them: or again the argument can be repeated about bastards. Shakespeare did not like them much. Did he remember the reason he had to marry his Anne, for whom he seemed to have little love?

But continuing this line of argument, if we consider the prevailing attitude of the plays we see that they have an aristocratic attitude, having no real contact with the common people. Reasoning on such slender lines we are led to believe that the author must have been cultured and well-bred. This would be false reasoning, however, for the aristocratic attitude was Marlowe's attitude—"What glory is there in the common good"—so that it is fair to assume that the plays were written for a specific audience, and that the aristocratic bias came from the author's desire to please his patrons, and not necessarily from his breeding.

A fair assessment of the evidence must, I think, take the case against Shakespeare's authorship as not proven. Despite the negative (or alternatively, nauseating) personality that comes out of the books about him, it is not Shakespeare who is lacking in any way but his idolatrous and Victorian-minded biographers. The argument against him is often interesting and has a sort of fantastic and drunken plausibility: but most of the time

it is concerned with employing facts that don't exist to solve a mystery that still does.

The original scepticism about Shakespeare's inability to write the plays was presumably based on the purely snobbish conviction that nobody below the most well-bred and cultured of the day could have had sufficient education and knowledge to have written them.

Although it will be decried alike by the orthodox and the heretical, a valid suggestion here would be that of reversing the general theory—that Shakespeare wrote the plays but one of the courtiers (Southampton for instance, since Shakespeare dedicated his first two poems to him) revised and refined them. This could not be a popular theory since it is not sufficiently iconoclastic.

Another possibility would seem to be that Shakespeare, when paid to do it, was quite willing to put the master touches to any and *all* plays given to him by anybody. It must always be remembered that Shakespeare wrote his plays for money. This suggests of course that all the theorists could be right. There is a faint suggestion of plausibility in some of the evidence of all the theories, and this idea that Shakespeare would take anyone's plays for cobbling echoes the original one of Delia Bacon who argued in 1857 that Elizabethan drama was controlled by a secret council which included, among others, Bacon, Raleigh and the Earl of Oxford.

The Earls of Derby, Rutland, Oxford and Southampton (and indeed many a less famous member of Elizabeth's court) have the same approximate background of culture, and their interests suggest about the same likelihood that any one of them could have written the plays: but it is rather difficult to understand why anyone should seek to believe that the author was Bacon. This seems an exercise in deliberate wrong-headedness, for surely by character alone Bacon's authorship is singularly improbable. Even the insipid and nebulous William Shakespeare of the diehard Stratfordian is a more likely character than the ambitious and self-seeking Viscount of St. Albans.

The Bacon theory can only suggest that if the cyphers are valid, Bacon managed to insert one or two pages into the plays in an endeavour to mislead the gullible into thinking he wrote them. This sort of action would not be amiss to the "wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind."

For most readers of Shakespeare, a certain discrimination and literary perception will be sufficient to decide that Bacon did not write the plays, but there are still a few questions that will continue to await adequate answers. When Arnold wrote "We ask and ask" he was saying more than he knew.

There is the mystery of Shakespeare's will, in which he leaves his wife his second-best bed. It is a muddled and unduly long will, and noteworthy to sceptics in that in it Shakespeare makes no mention at all of his

books or manuscripts. As far as direct proof goes, Shakespeare is not known to have possessed a book.

There is the curious fact that Shakespeare's father could not sign his name: and neither could one of Shakespeare's daughters: and perhaps it is not unfair to consider it a little remarkable that so eminent a poet and dramatist would have left his daughter illiterate. And the three signatures on the will suggest that Shakespeare himself did not write with any grace or clarity.

The sonnets have been examined for clues with the result that they have proved just as many theories as the plays: they have been rearranged in accordance with a rhyming link system which upset the hidebound orthodox and delighted the Baconians, who thought in their benumbed way that any defect of any sort proved Bacon's authorship. The sonnets have been acclaimed the greatest sonnets in the language and dismissed as mere literary exercises. Confronted with the genius of Shakespeare, the normal critical mind itself sometimes achieves a genius for ill-digested hyperbole. But are the sonnets as we know them those same poems that Francis Meres called "sugred sonnets"? Compared with the fashionable conceits of the age "sugred" does not seem to be the most appropriate word for them.

And of course there remains the greatest question of all, that mystery before which all theories are revealed for what they are, mere playthings of the imagination—If Shakespeare's plays were written by some other hand why did not someone say so, not in tortured and makebelieve cyphers and codes, not in sly and slanting allusion, but clearly and unequivocally? For all the bluster and belligerence, for all the counterfeit certainty and shrill conviction of the anti-Stratfordians, there is not one concrete fact, there is simply no irrefutable evidence at all that the plays were written by anyone but the vague and mysterious William Shakespeare of Stratford on Avon.

A DEDICATION

JAMES KIRKUP

You fill the lonely places at my side
Where only shadow lay.
Our laughter will no longer hide
In grieving, when the words I say
From love's invention come,
And your compassion lets me speak
Those things my heart made dumb,
Lest it should hear their loveliness, and break.

American Poetry: III

SIX POETS

Walt Whitman—Poet of Science, by John Beaver (King's Crown Press, N.Y. and Oxford University, 18s.)
Uncollected Poems of James Russell Lowell (edited by Thelma Smith University of Pennsylvania Press, $5.00.)
Stone Bears of Stockton (by Allen E. Woodall, The Writer's Press, Stockton, California.)
Beyond the Mountains (by Kenneth Rexroth, New Directions, Norfolk, Connecticut.)
The Difficult Estimate (by Staunton Calvert, Anderson House, Washington, D.C.)
The Metaphysical Needle (by Madeline Gleason, The Centaur Press, San Francisco.)

Reviewed by EVELYN SCOTT

Mr Joseph Beaver's "Walt Whitman-Poet of Science", though, as a contribution to "Whitmania", it may not have a counterpart, is not intrinsically an impressive or unique volume. But as a "phenomenon" of our era it has an adventitious "significance" which recalls to the reviewer two comparable books that aroused her mirth when, in the late nineteen-thirties, they came her way: one of these "anthropologically" concerned with the "sitting-heights" of "old Virginians", and the other offering tribute to America's architectural magnificence in the terms of the miles of copper-wire and the tons-weights of various metals which have gone into the erection of Manhattan's "fairy palaces" and "marble halls."

Both these earlier books were by professors of Southern Universities, and were, apparently, produced under the aegis of the Roosveltian "New Deal"; and Mr. Beaver, eleven years afterward and in New York, has utilized his data by applying a method not unlike theirs to an attempt to "reveal" a scientist in Whitman; though there seems little on which to base his challenge save Whitman's friendship with John Burroughs, and the allusions in his work to the natural sciences—and to astronomy in particular—as topics of the hour with a normal appeal to a man of imagination.

Mr. Beaver, however, has ignored the compellingness of sheer magnitude to one of Whitman's temperament; and, having to some extent shown him as methodical, rather than haphazard, as is often supposed, sets out to demonstrate his own point further, with mathematical computations, probably very exact, of the positions of the sun, moon and stars

during Whitman's composition of certain of his best-known poems containing references to these celestial bodies.

The earnestness and plain sincerity of a performance for which, "academically-speaking", Mr. Beaver is probably well-enough equipped. infuses it, for the reviewer with a lingering pathos; but to essay to interchange the critical approach to art with the approach of the more erudite employees of "City Departments of Sanitation" to the pseudo "science" contemporaneously venerated as bearing on "vocation", is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the creative process itself, and, were it less frequent, would require less emphasis here.

It carries the reviewer back to the New York of the nineteen-twenties, wherein the *literati* were wont to jest about the "Technocracy" to which Mr. Beaver is a convert; though the same jesters seemed unaware—as they sympathized with a current "movement" to increase "Labour" organization to dimensions thought to be synonymous with an eventual "socialization" of the State—that "Technocracy" and the "new science of economy" put forward as the means of implementing "socialization", drew their materials from an identical fountain-source. However, "Technocracy", as a "practical" *credo*, has, since, become the anonymous victor over both "Capital" and "Labour" in old-fashioned version. And as its methods are detachable from all idealism and can be exploited under any and every label, banner, or standard, one turns from Mr. Beaver's diffident "treatise" to the volume of poems by James Russell Lowell, admitted, by the editor, to be an inferior aftermath of his career, and feels a pang of dismay on perceiving how inapposite, in a world that consummates "Technocracy's" doctrines in "controlled" and "planned" living, the artificially "romantic" love-lyrics and the rhymed polemics of this early sponsor of American "Abolition" and of "Liberalism."

To students of the period, there will be attraction in this book, which, though all the poems in it, save a few, were much-circulated in their day, has the effect of giving us a glimpse of Lowell, the traditional figure, in a sort of "undress", and, in this informal guise, disclosed as, in personal contexts, both tender and obtuse, and, as a political-literary "leader", impetuous and righteous, staunch and self-blinded.

Miss Smith has satisfactorily accomplished the intention expounded by her in her preface, and has re-illumined to some degree Lowell's personality and his times. But the reviewer, having pursued the compilation, still considers it legitimate to regret that America's "social scene" has not ceased to be bounded by the very "godly" provincialism which was James Russell Lowell's salient fault, and has its dangerous offshoots in regional and national bigotries peculiar to no section, and in a general credulity and incomprehension of self's proneness to delusion, which handicaps Americans individually and as a people.

It was in the mid-nineteen-thirties, as "Technocracy" was beginning

to have a foothold, since become firmer, in America's "educational" sphere, that those who, in every generation, invest heavily in "social policies" yet contrive, somehow, to remain nameless, began a fostering, at Universities and Colleges throughout the country of summer conclaves, which have continued, between writers of long experience—appointed to constitute "Advisory Committees"—and lonely people who saw in "literary honours" construed as inextricable from "prizes" and print, an opportunity to escape solitude in city boarding-houses, and marooning on ranches and farms, and in Mormon communities and such remote villages as that from which a Western woman, for whose existence I can vouch, had, in lieu of railway fare, walked many miles over a mountain road merely that she might display to critical "preceptors" her reporting for a village weekly. And it was then that the reviewer became aware of the inception on American soil of that world-wide calamity recently designated by John Metcalfe, "organized Philistinism": since it was already apparent, fifteen years ago, that "economic pressure" was sacrificing creative minds of proven worth—Allen Tate, Caroline Gordon, John Peale Bishop, Sherwood Anderson, Ford Madox Ford, Carl Van Doren, John Crowe Ransom, Katherine Ann Porter and Edward Davison are among the scores of practised artists who have served as "Conference Advisors"—in an attempt to bring fame to the many who pay their fee and are, therefore, in the mood of those for whom imagination has opened a "glittering gate" through which they expect to be inducted both into "genius" and the large incomes a majority attribute to any writers frequently encountered among the published.

Such has been, from coast to coast and at all seasons, an oblique but prime factor in the transmogrification of "University life" since the elder descendants of James Russell Lowell's circle succumbed to a stressing, by circumstance, of mere numbers: which, unless it is more than feebly combatted as a trend, will soon have made the last of the "silk purses" of the original fine arts into the "sows' ears" of a commodity fabricated wholesale, and largely trashy, imitative and derived. And as arrivals at "Conferences", when appearing with completed or uncompleted *mss* under their arms, have already, in the main, absorbed "Technocratic" formulae which misinterpret "the greatest good" of those same "numbers" they represent as needing to take no account of inner value, and they are, beside, often shortly "contacted" by the "scouts" sent, either conspicuously to bully tyros into acquiescence to commercial dictation, or stealthily, to wheedle them into complacence, they expect to be "instructed" in things that—as Mr. Cyril Kay-Scott was wont to say to his art-students—"can never be taught": while those "Advisors" with the spirit left to rebel, welcome with hosannahs even such inadequately substantiated talents as are disparately purveyed in the volumes here listed, by Mr. Allen E. Woodall, Mr. Kenneth Rexroth, and Mr. Staunton Calvert.

The qualities of these three men are in categories as dissimilar as the cosy cultural suburbia which seems to have been the spiritual habitat of Mr. Woodall while writing his "Stone Bears of Stockton", the "neo-classic" but "high-minded" slum which is the setting of the four one-act plays by Mr. Rexroth, whose preoccupations are the blatant repulsiveness of the murder and lust he essays to poeticize, and the chaste inner sanctum of tenuous emotion and honest thought whence Mr. Staunton has inscribed "The Difficult Estimate."

These are, as yet, authors to be regarded as among the "lesser lights"; for, although their compass is precisely of the sort to be measured by the "yard-sticks" in favour with most "Conference Committees" with a residual inclination to permit "business" the semblance of art, and the three are indisputably above commercial dictation, at this juncture, the human warmth diffused from Mr. Woodall's mildly pleasing descriptive booklet is of the order of the "poetic" rather than strictly poetry and here and there his verse is marred by incursions of the hackneyed, such as a "mocking-bird" singing for him fantastically but no less hackneyedly "at night"; Mr. Rexroth's essay at "jazzing" an Eliot-Pound of blending of classic lore and colloquialisms is too fumbling to be relieved of the monotony of a lurid content by his brief spurts of the poetic genuine sustained merely for the length of a line or two; and Mr. Calvert, notwithstanding that he gains from the contrast between his craftsman's skill and reticent temper and Mr. Rexroth's bolder gropings, is markedly lacking in distinction of outlook.

And yet were it not that "Technocracy's" crassness, imposed on all, has wrought havoc in every critic's sense of proportion—so that poets not of "major stature" are likely to be acclaimed by the despairing as "discoveries" commensurate with those of a Melville, Whitman or Poe, or else to be slighted altogether—it would seem critically apropos to praise Mr. Woodall for his responsiveness to what is least cramping in local landscape and dwell less on his obvious limitations; to emphasize the signs in the self-conscious Mr. Rexroth of potentialities that have been balked in his travail with subject-matter which, probably, he has been unable to elevate to profundity because—as his preface informs us—he has been "stalled" with its brutalities for ten years, and, after a convincingly repellent depiction of a wanton in the first play, "Phaedra", was foredoomed to triteness and ennui; and to extol in Mr. Calvert the fine-skeined sensibility which threads like a living nerve through his sober lyrics and tinges his aphoristic couplets with intellectuality, and to touch merely passingly on his occasional platitudes and truisms.

However, in the battle against lurking "Technocracy", the critic must preserve her sense of proportion, somehow; and that is why she had reserved consideration of Madeline Gleason's "The Metaphysical Needle" for this article's conclusion; since, while the discernment behind Mr.

Calvert's utterances, in their nearly Japanese parsimony, is of a kind to deepen with the years, a quality in Miss Gleason at once unripe and authoritative intimates to the reviewer a possible range in her expression which has already swept her beyond these contemporaries and may sweep her further yet.

She is, of course, in the "self-liberated" sardonic glibness of even her most serious poems, less the metaphysician than she believes herself; but the incisiveness of her insights in seizing unhesitatingly on the crux of assorted human predicaments and exposing their character in telling comments, should be her best defence against accusations of "superficiality" and "flippancy" which may, otherwise, seem borne out by the amusingly whimsical but unsubtle—and, in such contexts, puerile—page decoration by Hal Goldman, with which her publishers have supplied her.

The reviewer, with good cause, has the utmost mistrust of the "modern" transfer of poetry from the poet's mind to the pulpit; and her own judgment of the religious rests, today, with Mr. Calvert's retrospect, as he interrogates, "I know, I swear, nothing of older men and little of younger! How shall I guess their hearts from the one I bear?" However, she finds Miss Gleason's emotive cerebration provocative in the superior meaning of the adjective; and the well-defined, highly-individualized contours implicit in her vivid and original metaphor, with the swift trenchance of her attacks on human follies in this generation, are those of a "poet to watch" with a philosophic eye.

★

IN T. S. ELIOT'S HONOUR

"Last year's words belong to last year's language"

ALAN SMITHIES

The old disliked you, for their faded muse
Was a blown Ceres, jaded, glib and bright,
Paid in the coin that bankrupt suitors use—
Phrases worn smooth; praise insincere and slight.
The young with unreflecting zeal construe
Your grammar of dissent, enlarging it:
Not knowing, nor accepting, if they knew,
That Dante's wisdom lurks behind Donne's wit.
I, who am neither young nor old, attest
The clear vernacular that killed despair,
Astringent beauty, strangely manifest
In the mind's waste-land, where the reefs lay bare.

An age without a faith was tamed, and heard
Beyond the music of your words, the Word.

TIME IS THE THEME

Winged Chariot, by Walter de la Mare (Faber and Faber, 10s. 6d.).
A Gloucestershire Year, by Eva Dobell (Jongleur Press, Bradford. N.P.).
Purbeck and Other Poems, by Lord Cottesloe (Jordan & Sons, N.P.).
A Sleep of Prisoners, by Christopher Fry (Oxford Univ. Press, 6s.)
The Visitor, by Haro Hodson (Heinemann, 6s.).
Colours and Windows, by William Wolff (Chaterson Ltd., 5s.).
A Tetralogy, by Arthur Constance (Poems in Pamphlet, Hand & Flower Press, 1s.).
Songs of Downland and Weald, by Stephanie Grey (Mitre Press, 2s. 6d.).
Songs of Desire and of Divine Love, by P. J. Fisher (Epworth Press, 4s.).
The Voice of Time, by Henry Collett (Williams & Norgate, 4s.).

Reviewed by WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

Time is the dominant theme for most poets, as indeed it is for all thinking men if we pause a second to admit it. And in our own century time—which has measured man's greatest achievements and failures—has taken on a relentless significance; we are never allowed to forget it; we live to its remorseless beat to a degree of individual and communal consciousness never before equalled in human experience.

Mr. Walter de la Mare has always been acutely aware of man's tenuous hold on the shifting scene of life. In one memorable lyric poem after another he has tried to interpret the fugitive and transient in man's life in time, and now in *Winged Chariot* he has achieved what must surely be the most complete discussion of the theme in modern poetry. Bringing to it his scholarship, his philosophy, his sensitive perception and vast technical equipment, he has written a long poem on Time which may come to be regarded as his greatest single performance. And I use that word *performance* deliberately, for this work, apart from catching the very spirit of poetry and truth, is supremely an exercise and a *tour de force.*

No one shall say in future that Mr. de la Mare is not modern in his poetic approach. We have perhaps been surfeited of late years with pistons and hammers and suspenders, but here in the first few pages is a Yale key, the dulcet TIM of the automatic telephone, Greenwich and tic-tocs and ratchets, pawls and springs and split-seconds, exhibiting a range of knowledge of time-measuring devices which would have excited the enthusiasm of the late Commander Gould of the early Brains Trusts. And as he proceeds Mr. de la Mare reveals a wealth of curious information about the mechanics of man's life as well as of the celestial universe which never gives the impression of being "swotted up". He disarms the reader at the start:

> ". . . Why this absurd concern with clocks, my friend?
> Watching Time waste will bring no more to spend,
> Nor can retard the inevitable end."

And he asks if the inventors and possessors of eight-day clocks feel the Future less bleak by being able to measure the jumps of that "madcap hare" Time. But never too soon he is away in his own realm of nimbuses and sylphs, pausing to look at a cloud of midges in the evening air, "an ovoid of intricate *winged* things, beautiful", and at that "heiress of the primeval", the cuckoo, asking "How learned she Time, season, mileage and the momentary?" and so proceeds delicately and expertly to Plato's water-clock, "Its voice scarce audible, bell-like and low As Juliet's communings with her Romeo." His thought strays to insomnia, to phantom-haunted midnight and the "heeded perceptions of a secret mind" and he asks:

> "When, then, I leave this haunt, as soon I may,
> Will not some homesick relic of me stay—
> Unseen, unheard? And while—what? . . . *Time*, away!?"

The beauty of a poem of this order is that the treatment of the theme permits of the utmost flexibility; Mr. de la Mare lets himself wander up and down the ways of his life, pausing here to relive a memory, there to sift a conclusion, to savour a fragrance of human companionship, to re-tell a fable, to hover with thoughts of Chaucer and Keats and Marvell, Wyatt and Drayton, and to dwell awhile with Coleridge—with Coleridge who gave something of the form to this poem. For, as in the *Ancient Mariner*, the *Winged Chariot* is marginalised with 'aids', and if the reader pauses to perpend he will see in italics at the side some scrap from Marvell or Shakespeare and scores of others to test his scholarship; but he will turn—and will return many times—to the main stream of the poem, flowing, as Shakespeare's did in *The Tempest*, to a Thulé of serene accomplishment which makes the poet's place in time assured.

Another writer who has spent life in the service of poetry is Miss Eva Dobell, whose little book, *A Gloucestershire Year*, is certain to find many friends in the West Country. Miss Dobell is unashamedly a traditional lyrist, using customary metres to sing the beauties of the countryside in the four seasons of the year, and whether she writes of Painswick, of a Roman camp, of a distant view of the Malvern hills, "that seem The insubstantial ranges of a dream", or of wild flowers and trees, she brings a reverent spirit and much accomplishment to her work.

Time is again the theme in many of the poems in Lord Cottesloe's *Purbeck*, a region peculiarly dear to his present reviewer. For in this Dorset 'isle', approached through the gate of Wareham, is surely one of the most concentrated gatherings of time's ghosts in all Britain:

> "Race after race came hither; rude their tongue,
> Small was their knowledge, scanty was their speech;
> Nature they feared; they lived beyond the reach
> Of record, save of what was told or sung . . ."

With Mr. Christopher Fry's *A Sleep of Prisoners* time is indeed the essence of a dream; for here we have four British soldiers flung by their captors with beds of straw into a church, with the long night before them and only their strangely dovetailed dreams to make the action of the play. A willing suspension of disbelief is necessary to accept the symbolical translation of the four into the dream shapes and voices of Cain and Abel, David and Absolom, Abraham and Isaac and other Old Testament characters, but such is the skilled power of Mr. Fry's writing that many will be found to concede this- -especially in the theatre or (following the contemporary vogue in its return to the origins of English Drama) in a church setting. I was not fortunate enough to see one of the performances in St. Thomas's off Regent Street, and, as a reader, I do not find the complicated dream-sequence carrying dramatic conviction. But I welcome wholeheartedly this poet's deepening of thought and purpose and the repeated stress of his belief in the interdependence of humanity.

The ingenious black-and-white artist who is responsible for those frolicsome animals on the sports page of *The Observer*, Mr. Haro Hodson, shows in *The Visitor* a remarkable wedding of serious thought with lyrical dexterity. I am tempted to quote the beautifully evocative title poem, but that would be too obvious in reviewing verse of this concentrated quality. Like Mr. Fry, this young poet has a frightened, almost panicked sense of the betrayal of life in a world still throbbing with beauty:

> "Under an ill star were we born.
> While others rose and stepped
> Into a sure unquestioned dawn
> On us the heavens wept.
>
> Ill-starred? An answer in the sands
> Of shrinking time shows plain:
> We are the children, ours the hands
> Through which the light must rain."

If Mr. William Wolff's new collection, *Colours and Windows*, has for me an air at times of being a poetic journal of moods and influences mainly amorous I must admit scores of notable precedents in the long line of English poets; but lines such as "The heat has laziness and I have Oriel" and "The sun at maximum voltage taunts your ice-cream skin, my Gloria," have a cloying intensity in the display of an otherwise extremely accomplished talent. Mr. Wolff is at his best in such poems as "Storm of Life" in which he expresses his imagination through modernist technique:

> "To-night the sea is calm—its murderer's voice
> Is quiet as we look up from our night meal;
> I eat my bread in transitory peace.
> I raise my eyes again—upon the swell,
> Black-plumed and vivid fire below by night,

Treading the universe to bring me light,
The many-mansioned ship comes for my soul."

And in poems of the passing treasurable moments, such as "Breakfast at the Summer Cottage", "First Long Frock" and "The Village" he excels.

I admire the ingenuity and rhetorical sweep of Mr. Arthur Constance's somewhat Whitmanesque irregular unryhmed verse in *A Tetralogy* whilst regretting something excessive in his method. Our already-mentioned friend the cuckoo gives an example. In one section Mr. Constance leads off with the questionable assertion that the bird "takes a little mother-anxiety from human mothers" and then gets well into Mr. Cherry Kearton's territory with a description of what the cuckoo does to the hedge-sparrow and her nest:

"And now the cuckoo has come.
And here is the egg of the stranger to care for.
And here are her own loved eggs neglected for this.
And here are some of them addled,
and some, unhatched,
tossed to the puzzled earth.
And here are some eggs hatched out, and the foundling fed,
lavishly, slavishly fed, and her own neglected.
And here are her fledglings flung from the nest,
in the horrified hedge entangled,
on the bewildered earth dying,
while the mother-bird fondly feeds the gawky foundling."

It is the same with roses, butterflies, hares, bees and ants: all go into the rhetorical catalogue in the search for an embracing "perfect symbolism of a human life" which must ever be elusive.

In *Songs of Downland and Weald* Miss Stephanie Grey ranges herself among the poets of Sussex and many of the pieces included first saw the light in the Sussex County Magazine. How simply she writes may be seen from the closing stanzas of "Sussex at Peace";

"O calm strong downs stand by me
When the tide is ebbing away,
When the music of life is muted
And the colours of earth fade grey.

But you will be there through the ages,
Each dawn that the Weald awaits
And the song of your larks in the springtime
Will rise to the Golden Gates."

Mr. P. J. Fisher in *Songs of Desire and of Divine Love* courts both the secular and the sacred muse. In form he is both traditional and experimental and has obviously been influenced by Hopkins in rhythm and by

Donne in intellectual subtlety. One verse from "Stable Light" will indicate the distinction of his work:

"Dazzle the wise, O wonderful flaming pilot star!
This stable lantern's beam to me is more wondrous far.
His were the legions of stars in the whelming reaches of space,
But never has earthly light illumined His man-child face—
Never till this strange night in this so strange place."

The last book to be noticed, Mr. Henry Collett's *The Voice of Time*, returns us to the engrossing theme of Mr. de la Mare's volume. Mr. Collett is prompted by scratch-dials on old churches, by wild violets, and by a denarius of the Emperor Hadrian to speculations on the activity of time. A world of profundity lies in these lines from "Viola Oderata":

"One life unites thy life with mine,
One soul enfolds my own with thee;
I am the wiser part of thine,
And thou the lovelier part of me."

THE CAVAFY CULT

REVIEWED BY OSWELL BLAKESTON

The Poems of C. P. Cavafy. Translated by John Mavrogordato (The Hogarth Press, 12s. 6d.)
Oedipus Rex. Translated by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald (9s. 6d.)

Why is Cavafy (1863-1933) suddenly enjoying cult praise from many English readers? One does not believe that all the cultists are able to appreciate the poet in his original utterance; and we are left, then, with the translations.

Courteously, one must take it for granted that these poems are poems in the language in which they were written; but they must be poems of great austerity, with words patterned and balanced in an ultimate linguistic felicity which gives them their sanction to immortality. Such poetry almost defies translation. When a vivid imagination makes words transform meaning (as in Lorca) we may hope for a quality of imagination to survive translation; but when there is no overcharge of meaning and plain words are simply transformed into poetry by their arrangement, then we may expect but the sketch of a poem when it is transposed into another language.

Of course one is grateful to have the Cavafy translations, as they offer us a chance to know a little more about a name. Now we can be certain, for instance, that Cavafy is not a poet of profound thought or with any lightning revelation of image. We can see that this must be "classical" poetry in so far as it tends to be the simplest statement of an idea, an

erotic encounter or an historic occasion. So, unless we can read the originals, can we ever have a measure of this poet's achievement? His simple statements, once they are parted from the music which they make, tend to sink to the commonplace.

As a relief from complexity, one may indeed obtain some enjoyment as well as instruction from the translations; but not, I would say, any final satisfaction. We are, after all, conditioned to complexity. The quickening of our pulses, the integration of our responses and our illumination come today from poets who understand the orchestration of our nerves—or else our pleasure and exaltation lie in musical perfection where sound is the sense and content.

Mr. Mavrogordato admits that he has not attempted problems of homophonous rhymes and other verbal dexterities; and he confesses that his versions are "as literal as possible". It is not for me to say how well he has succeeded within the limits he has set himself; but the limits are enough, when the poetry in question is of the Cavafy order, to give any critic a sense of disease. Finally, the translations are meant for people who cannot read the original—and that is why the editor asked for my comment rather than any scholar's; and I must speak of what I find for those who can only find as much.

Well, then, why the cult?

The mood of irony in the "idea" poems is certainly close to contemporary disillusion. "In A Township of Asia Minor": we, too, have learnt that for the small village it matters little which Power is the ultimate "liberator", as we have seen that either way the village dies. "From The School Of The Renowned Philosopher": we, too, know that the abstractions of popular politicians have no concern with the happiness of the individual, and that the big men are playing a prestige game of their own. "Waiting For The Barbarians": we, too, realise that "the barbarians" are used by our rulers to unite us so that we can be more easily governed. But such ideas do not in themselves make a poem, and can be read more succinctly in *Peace News*. The critic is more apt to notice that, in translation, these poems of comment indulge in too long a build-up before making their point. "A Prince From Western Libya", for example, has twenty-three lines of explanation before reaching its *raison d'être*:

> " . . . and he suffered no little discomfort
> Having whole conversations stacked inside him."

This is a prose treatment of the epigram, a form which demands that every word should be part of the pith.

Equally, the love poems seem to be prose fragments. "Twenty-Three To Twenty-Four": two lovers meet, get drunk and spend the night together: "The Twenty-Fifth Year Of His Life": a man sits in a café hoping to meet again a casual love; and so on. There is no philosophy

(as in Gide's "Fruits Of The Earth") or special communication of wonder (as in H. D.'s "Red Roses For Bronze"), just a simple statement of the facts of encounter. I find them touching because they refer to the casual loves of youth; but one cannot say that they are in themselves—as one reads them in translation—great poems. It is the thought of Youth which is the poem, and associated nostalgia and mourning; and one may be deeply moved by one's own memories of similar experiences. (Possibly there may be something here especially for those who live in a war-torn world in which affairs must be as transitory and lost as these meetings in Alexandria and Antioch?)

Again, the historical poems, of which there are many, may bring a secondary effect of relief when we find that the modern Greek poet has a grasp on the fact that tragedy occurs when little people think they are worthy to be mixed up in something big. We fear from a Greek poet the great heroic viewpoints beloved by the straining great! Happily, Cavafy is always ready to prick the mythology through stressing the minor aspects of historic incident. As Mr. Rex Warner says in his introduction: "The picture of a youth standing in a pink dress at a splendid parade moves Cavafy's imagination more than does the love of Antony and Cleopatra or the success of Octavius." Cavafy never forgets that in the stories of the past the "epic" fleet was probably a couple of ships, and that Greek peasants will always turn any incident into a "heavy matter"—buying a fresh fish or hearing of the death of an old king—without wishing to create an exploitable myth of the colossal. The sane peasant view is that anything is significant if it happens to an individual, but the individual is not "important" by reason of pretences.

In the ideas of political disillusion, in the thoughts of love as a bought glimpse of beauty rather than a partnership, and in the humanistic approach to history, we may find emotional if not poetic reasons for the cult of Cavafy-in-translation. The cult, though, must in part remain a mystery.

The mystery does not elude us in *Oedipus Rex* for the drama has underlined force in our psychoanalytical age. Two American poets and scholars are responsible for the new translation; and their labour of love does not read like a labour.

★

RIB

Woman was made from sleep, but had man dreamt
All that her heart and mind would hold exempt
From every law of reason, might not he
Have craved insomnia through Eternity?

B. R. Gibbs

SHAKESPEARIAN EMENDATIONS

By HOWARD PARSONS

Hamlet No. 3

I, 4, 23. Speaking to Horatio, Hamlet denounces the king's drinking habits, which leads him to moralize as follows:

> So, oft it chances in particular men,
> That for some vicious mole of nature in them—
> Or by some habit— that these men,
> Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect—
> His virtues else, be they as pure as grace—
> Shall in the general censure take corruption
> From that particular fault: *the dram of eale*
> Doth all the noble substance *of a doubt*
> To his own scandal.

All this part of Hamlet's speech is omitted from the Folio. Malone printed "The dram of *base* doth all the noble substance *of worth dout*," and explained that *dout* is short for *do out* as *don* is for *do on*. He thought *eale* might be *ill;* Staunton said the errors in the two lines "have occasioned 'much throwing about of brains'; that for *eale* two of the quartos have *ease*, and that Dr. Ingleby thought "of a doubt" was originally *derogate*. Cowden Clarke, Knight and Grant White read "Doth all the noble substance *often dout*", and Prof. Dover Wilson says "I believe 'often dout' to be the best solution of this crux." F. A. Marshall asks "As *devil* is misprinted *deale* in the quartos, may not *evil* be misprinted *eale*?: Verity thinks it is. Prof. Dover Wilson is confident "Shakespeare wrote *eule*, of which *eale* would be a simple mis-reading." Knight suggested "the dram of *bale*". To smooth these troubled waters I hopefully pour in—

> the dram of ill
> doth all the noble substance *oft divert*
> To his own scandal.

meaning "These men" thoughout their lives are "carrying the stamp of one defect" which *diverts* their course from fame to infamy." "Oft" is necessary, because the first quoted line says "Oft it chances", i.e., *oft* but not always. *Eale* can be explained thus: the compositor set-up what he thought he heard, without stopping to think what it meant. The letter *v* was printed *u* in Shakespeare's day, so compare

> oft d i v e r t
> ofa d o u b t

As both words start with *d* and end with *t*, the one phrase could easily have been mis-heard or mis-read for the other. Verity says "of a doubt" conceals some verb to which *doth* is the auxiliary: my emendation

brings the verb into light. Staunton mentions Lettsom's observation "A verb I should think must lurk under the corruption "a doubt" or "doubt", with the signification of turn, pervert, corrupt or the like." I have proved his surmise to be correct.

I, 5, 9. The ghost says—

I am thy Fathers Spirit,
Doom'd for a certaine terme to walke the night; . .
And for the day *confin'd to fast in Fiers,*

Malone quotes from Chaucer's Parson's Tale, "And moreover the misere of hell shall be in defaute of mete and drinke," Prof. Dover Wilson quotes from Dante's "Purgatory" to similar effect. Steevens extracts from "The Wyll of the Devyll"—"Thou shalt lye in frost and fire With sicknesse and hunger;" F. A. Marshall offers the same quotation. Staunton says that in the 1603 Quarto the reading is "Confinde *in flaming* fire," and that Heath proposed "Confin'd to *lasting* fires"—to which Cowden Clarke objects, for "deprivation of food was one of the penalties they were believed to endure."

As Shakespeare wrote "as *hollow* as a ghost", King John, III, 4, 84, it is evident he would not have written as though a ghost could eat; moreover, he would not (considering the fires) have mentioned fasting and have said nothing about thirsting. There is a contrast implied between walking and confinement: the one is a movement and the other a fixture, therefore, "fast" does not mean deprivation of food but of movement. So undoubtedly the phrase is corrupt, and equally certain, the poet wrote

And for the day confined fast in fires,

Confined is trisyllabic, as in King Lear, IV, 1, 76, "There is a cliff, whose high and bending head Looks fearfully in the confin'ed deep:" During a verbal transmission, it was exceptionally easy to mishear the unaccented third syllable in "confin'ed".

I, 5, 29. As it appears in the Folio, Hamlet implores the ghost—

Hast, hast me to know it,
That with wings as swift
As *meditation,* or the thoughts of Love,
May sweepe to my Revenge.

Following Rowe, all editors print the first two lines as one, adding *I* after "That" and omitting one "Haste", Malone mentions Warburton's statement that "Hamlet, considering with what to compare the swiftness of his revenge, chooses two of the most rapid things in nature; on which Johnson remarked, "The comment on the word *meditation* is so ingenious that I hope it is just." The word is accepted by Malone, Staunton, Cowden Clarke, Chas. Knight, Grant White, Marshall, Verity and Prof. Dover Wilson.

Meditation is "Deep thought or continued contemplation" (Lloyds' Ency. Dic.), therefore it is very slow; whereas, "As swift as—the thoughts

of love" is very fast. Shakespeare would not thus have contradicted himself, therefore, *meditation* cannot be the right word. Johnson's "*hope* it is just" regarding Warburton's idea, proves he did not accept it. Shakespeare wrote—

As inspiration or the thoughts of love,

Probably the lines were dictated by one of the actors and *meditation* is the result of a slip of his memory. He knew the word had to do with thinking (like "*thoughts* of love") and that it ended in *a'tion,* so guessed "meditation" was the word. According to a quotation in the Century Dictionary, "a *sudden* perception of eternal right" is an *inspiration. Meditation* is frequently the cause and *Inspiration* the effect, for inspirations are seldom received unless they have been prepared for by long thought as Shakespeare himself shall witness: Merchant of Venice, I, 2, 31, "Holy men at their death have good inspirations." i.e., having been frequently engaged in pious meditation during their lives, they receive flashes of inspiration just before they die. An example of the suddenness of love is found AYLI V, 2, 36, "your brother and my sister no sooner met but they looked; no *sooner* looked but they loved."

★

COMPANION

F. A. KENNEDY

I am the dropped catch off the forcing bat,
I am the hopeless duck that costs the game,
I am the sudden silencing of chat
Back in the vast pavilion; I am shame.

I am the lassitude wherein is drowned
The maiden-voyaging idea, the brief
And buoyant inspiration—I am crowned
King of inertia, stultifier-in-chief.

I am the knot that keeps the tongue well tied,
I am the hot vermilion of dismay,
I am the loneliness that keeps your side
Wherever men are gathered and are gay.

I am the book that mildews on the shelf
Because its content is above compare.
I am your Fear of Failure, O my Self—
And is it not a cosy cell we share?

SHORT REVIEWS

Urania by Ruth Pitter, (Cresset Press 10s. 6d.)

I can hear the voices of three very dissimilar poets quietly singing in the background of Ruth Pitter's work—Emily Brontë, A.E. Housman and the Virgil of the *Georgics*. This does not imply that her work derives from these particular writers. But there they are, wandering through her strange world of small plants and dark, ragged trees, of blossoming vines and blessed quietness, her world wherein, although man, "mind-infected, mother-betrayed" persists in treading "the reasoned pathways to despair", such an abundant harvest of joy is to be gathered.

She shares with Housman an astringent sense of form, a deceptive impression of simplicity and perfect timing, though her rhythms are more various than his. She has also something of his personal frustration:

> To no end but to be old and poor,
> To lose the good, and to get the bane:
> To find no door like the rotting door
> Which I find not again:
> To weep in my bed at night
> And forget the tear of delight.

This sense of loss is by no means constant, however. Joy springs up in spite of grief. She is continually refreshed by the natural world whose meaning her eye sees and possesses and translates into vision:

> No matter what the body felt,
> No matter what it saw,
> My inmost spirit ever knelt
> In a blind love and awe:
>
> And dead or living knows full well,
> Sick or whole it knows,
> The secret it may never tell
> Of joy and of repose.

That impassioned instructor, the creator of the *Georgics,* is there very indistinctly, in the implications of her work and in her bitter statements on this epoch. Just as Virgil pleaded with the sophisticated Romans of his day to occupy themselves with husbandry if they would save themselves from the rot of luxury so does she work out salvation in the pursuits of humble living. Her work is studded with images of old country women, wise in the ageless inheritance of earth, of harvests—"the clean, the fruitful tree. Where the bright leaf shades the big plums flushed with fire"—of riches that lie unnoticed,

> There in the bank of the brook the immortal secret,
> In the ground under your feet the treasure of nations,
> Under the weary foot of the fool, the wild honey.

For all I know she may be an unwilling townswoman. Spiritually, in spite of her complexity and scholarship which are evident in nearly every line she writes, she inhabits a land of peasants who live according to season and weather, whose rhythm is quiet and whose experience deep and narrow. Although she may so passionately complain with that great malaise of the twentieth century, loneliness,

> How long, how long must I regret?
> I never found my people yet;
> I go about, but cannot find
> The blood-relations of the mind.

she is strongly linked to the past both in learning and instinct and the inherited traditions of that country world give her wholeness again after the divisions of her personal life.

Her moods are gentler and her desire for freedom far less ravaging, yet when she listens in the silence of twilight or morning for the voice of "the lonely Muse" she is not very far removed from that young woman who trimmed her lamp to guide the angel who tracked the waste of frozen snow across the wild December moors. There is the same disgust with mankind, the same influence of mysterious presences and unwilling need for love. But Emily Brontë made her tremendous statement of courage and faith just as her life was finally consumed. It is almost at this point that Ruth Pitter begins her struggle,

> . . . give me my proven mail,
> My arms of faith that cannot fail:
> I cleave the chaos and prevail.

and she gradually moves towards a reconciliation with life that Emily Brontë would have been too defiant ever to admit. She learns to be possessed of death without protesting, to sink and go down under the bitter sea and to be reborn out of terror:

> Even so, dread God! even so, my Lord!
> The fire is at my feet, and at my breast the sword:
> And I must gather up my soul, and clap my wings and flee
> Into the heart of terror, to find myself in thee.

Technically, excepting occasional lapses into an unpardonable primness in her use of that most tricky form, the couplet, she is masterly. Her feeling for music is sensitive and highly disciplined: her thought is never seduced by the loveliness of sound. In the first verse of "Call not to me", with the alliteration of l's and w's there is a swaying rhythm of the wind blowing over summer fields, while the second verse has the hiss of winter in it and the grating sounds of death. In "The Bridge", one of her most beautiful poems, with its long lines and slow rhythm, her bold reiteration of word and phrase and sonorous use of vowels give it the dignity of processional music.

The poems in this volume cover a period of about twenty-five years.

What I find particularly remarkable is the constancy of her inspiration. She appears to have suffered none of those political and religious crises endured by so many of our poets and there are moments when her own personal drama and mysticism are so intense that, like "the eagles of God, the translated spirits", she transcends life. Her faith survives the corruption and the creeping despairs and it is in the end as it was in the beginning—the vision of the inward eye blesses and sustains her and the sudden revelations of heaven that reward her patient watchfulness light her through the darkness between star and star.

PATRICIA LEDWARD.

Poems of St. John of the Cross: Spanish Text with a Translation by Roy Campbell. Preface by M. C. D'arcy, S. J. (The Harvill Press, Ltd., 12s 6d.)

The way of the verse translator is hard. Something is inevitably lost from language to language, and where this is not perceived to be so it is almost invariably because the translation has become memorable in its own rights, preserving only a distant relationship with the original in mood and feeling if not in literal equivalence. The translations of Gilbert Murray are an excellent example.

In this case the difficulty does not end there. These poems are born of an experience that is in its nature ineffable. They may reveal the fruits of that experience and in some sense convey their sweetness; but eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to know the essence of the mystery unless it be vouchsafed him from on high. Poet and technician but add grace and form to the telling of what rightly belongs to another world than this. But at least the mystic like St. John who is also 'a maker' can indicate the way to the heart of that mystery, even if he cannot distill its essence.

As Fr. D'Arcy points out in his Preface, the "long and metrically unfettered verse line" that Allison Peers used in his 1947 translation of the same text, "left the way free for a poet to try to turn into equivalent English verse what St. John has done in Spanish, and moreover to capture the very spirit of the original as Crashaw tried to do with St. Teresa." And the essence of that spirit in the case of St. John is a divine simplicity which Roy Campbell has sensitively perceived and rendered. His versions are much nearer to common speech than those of Peers, while preserving that bell-like sonority that is characteristic of Campbell's original verse. For example, in *En una noche oscura,* Peers renders

Sin otra luz y guía,
Sino la que en el corazón ardía

as

Lit by no earthly rays,
Nay, only by heart's inmost fire ablaze

where Mr. Campbell gives us with greater naturalness,

And with no other light
Except for that which in my heart was burning;

and in Stanza 4 not only are the Campbell rhythms simpler and smoother but somewhat closer in approaching to the ethereal quality of the original experience, where "*la luz del mediodía*" is translated as "the light of noonday clear" instead of as "noonday's brightest glare." And there is a wealth more of tender intimacy in rendering

Quedéme y olvidé, me,
El rostro recline sobre el Amado,

as

Lost to myself I stayed
My face upon my lover having laid

rather than as

Forgetful, rapt, I lay,
My face reclining on my lov'd one fair.

And in Poem III. to take only one other example,

. . . .*Oh toque delicado,*

is surely not as in Peers,

"O touch of love supernal,

but something much nearer to Campbell's

Oh touch how softly thrilling.

Although in the last stanza Campbell misses something of the full force of '*secretamente*' his rendering of the last line,

So daintily in love you make me fall

is much nearer to the mood of St. John than the stiffer,

How delicate the love thou mak'st me bear!

Phrases like 'softly thrilling' and daintily falling in love, Peers eschews in the interests of decorum; but it is a decorum as alien to the mystics as to the English—and Spanish—Metaphysical poets of the 17th Century. Once God is seen as the Divine Lover the simplest and most ardent terms of human love are used with unaffected naturalness, however strange they may sound to our sophisticated modern ears. Only full stanza quotations could really give something of the essential musical felicity of the original that Mr. Campbell has gone so far to recapture: the reader is referred especially to the opening of *En una noche oscura* or to the melodic simplicities of Stanza 21 of the superb *A dónde te escondiste*, rendered, with two exceptions, in mono-syllables throughout.

HERMANN PESCHMANN.

The Poetical Works of Tennyson, selected by John Gawsworth (Macdonald 9s. 6d.)

Selection from a poet's work is a responsible job of criticism, not just a convenient digest for the lazy. It will naturally reinforce any critical

remarks recorded in an introduction. The aim is not only to remove the invertebrate parts of the total work, but to isolate broadly the poet's essential qualities. Occasional poems, though good in themselves, if imported in too great numbers may well blur the outline. Mr Gawsworth's selection retains the symmetry, the severely logical beauty of a work of art. No poem has been needlessly omitted; each poem included represents some essential element in Tennyson's work. His love for the Classics, his metrical virtuosity, his power of gracious soliloquizing, above all his professional attitude towards poetry: he was no inspired amateur. His is the aural beauty of those poets like Landor or Milton who have based themselves strongly on classical literature though he is rich in visual beauty, too. And he is a poet in whom one is always discovering good new things. For their scarcity value Mr. Gawsworth includes *The Coach of Death*, a powerful production of his adolescence and the beautiful song from *The Hesperides*, whose suppression was regretted in later life by the poet himself. It is Tennyson's questioning note, though, his avidness for certainty, 'Behind the veil, behind the veil,' which is most characteristic. In *In Memoriam*, parts of *Maud, The Two Voices,* he returns and worries these themes of death and immortality again and again, hoping for and despairing of an answer. Such poems form the centre of this selection.

Generous and discriminating in his introduction, Mr. Gawsworth brings vividly before us the powerful figure of the shaggy, port-swallowing, tobacco-smelling human being, so different from that canonized shadow peculiar to the anti-Victorian school of critics. And this revaluation of a great poet, as Mr Gawsworth reminds us, owes much to the work of Sir Charles Tennyson, 'surely the most admirable of grandsons.'

IAIN FLETCHER.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

With regard to *The Shakespeare Myth* (Part One) by Mr. Herbert Corby, and its plethora of lack of evidence, it may be of interest for readers to hear the opinion of the famous actor Sir Henry Irving. In March 1902 he delivered to the Princeton University (U.S.A.) the annual "Trask" lecture: the subject chosen was *Shakespeare and Bacon*. Although this distinguished speaker disposed easily of the matter in hand, revealing also the sentiments held by Tennyson, the words argued in his lecture might well refute the theories concerning other prominent, aristocratic or highly placed persons on whose shoulders from time to time "our immortal bard" has been so regularly hoisted.

I will give a few of his principal arguments: "The Baconian theory required belief in a confederacy, the like of which never entered the

wildest imagination of man." "He defied any man to give him a coherent account of the conceivable circumstances in which Bacon acquired that mastery of the stage, without which the Shakespearean drama could not have been written." "Bacon's life was as well known as the life of any statesman or philosopher of our own time- -where was there the particle of evidence that he took even the smallest interest in the theatre?" "The Shakespeare plays were written exclusively for the stage by a playwright who was in the very centre and heart of theatrical life: they saw the craft of Shakespeare in his exits and his entrances (an essay might be written on Shakespeare's exits alone)." "Apart from the genius of the poet, Shakespeare was a great dramatic constructor: how could Bacon acquire this experience? Shakespeare acquired it because he was an actor and the hand of the actor was visible in all his dramatic work." "Efforts have been made to show that only Bacon could have known law, philosophy and natural history that abound in Shakespeare's illustrations; but how could Bacon have known and cared for the letter and spirit of the actor's calling which were more conspicuous? Not Hamlet alone, but all the plays were charged with theatrical associations. There was an apology in Henry V for the limited resources of the stage properties for representing the field of Agincourt. In Romeo and Juliet they were reminded of the 'two hours traffic of our stage'. What had Bacon to do with such details?" "In the technicalities of the stage Shakespeare was always accurate, but when he employed legal terms he was often wrong. In geography he gave Bohemia a coast; in navigation he started a ship from the gates of Milan. Shakespeare did not care a jot for judicial procedure and the law which authorized Shylock to take his pound of flesh, but forbade him to shed one drop of blood was not sanctioned by the judgement of Bacon."

"Shakespeare was a chartered borrower. He was the microcosm of his age. He had no great scholarship. The translated Plutarch served him so well that he turned whole passages into dramatic speeches. Shakespeare had an immeasurable receptivity in all that concerned human character. Sprung from the people he had the most intimate and sympathetic knowledge of country folk and country life that our literature could show. Shakespeare was mentioned in every contemporary list of poets; Bacon but once."

"I can't listen to you," said Tennyson to a guest at Freshwater, as he hastily left the room when this subject was raised, "you who would tear the laurels from the dead Christ!"

"Until it can be shown how the most alert intellectual world of Elizabeth lent itself to a gigantic imposture they could not take the Baconians with the gravity they demanded." These were some of Sir Henry Irving's words.

I am, etc.,

ARTHUR ROW.

THE LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS SONNET COMPETITION : 1951

To select one sonnet out of 129 for special award is not an easy task; and I make no claim to infallibility. But within my visionary limits I have honestly striven to make a just choice.

A point I would like to make is that I have spoken every sonnet *aloud*, several of them many times over, as I feel that is the best way to taste their full flavour.

I have awarded the Prize to Miss Daphne Blampied for her sonnet entitled "Beauty", which seems to combine the essentials of rhyme and line, clearness of conception, unbroken continuity of thought, and completeness.

As a "proxime accessit" I would name Miriam S. Foote's "Blind Musician", with its strong crescendo of emotion at the end of the sextet.

The following sonnets deserve high commendation:—

Valdemosa by J. Sackville Martin.
Focus by Joyce Evelegh.
Vision by Robert Whitehouse.
In Memory of my Gardener, Old Dowding by H. A. C. Evans.

This does not cover all the good work, and I received great enjoyment from more poets than I can here name.

WILTON COLE.

BEAUTY

Much has been made of beauty through the years:
Some call it truth, or joy increasing. Why,
Unlike these happy wanderers, should I
Find in their pleasure only cause for tears?
This music, pure delight to other ears,
These loved hills lying under summer sky,
Bring pain that sharpens into agony
And leaves a deeper scar each time it sears.

I only know that beauty, seen or heard,
Deeper than ever wrought Toledo blade,
Bites to the shrinking heart. I do not dare
To listen to the singing of the bird
That flutes so dreadfully. I am afraid,
And spring's sad green is more than I can bear.

DAPHNE BLAMPIED.

PREMIUM COMPETITION REPORT

(New Series: No. 8.)

Of the forty entries to the competition which closed on August 15th, I preferred Mr. Ralph Hall's *Impasse*. It had admittedly, a Verlaine ring; but it had a general philosophy still concerning *la Vie*, and so contemporary and valuable.

JOHN GAWSWORTH.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Pamela Cleaver, Kensington.
Isobel Cumming, Birmingham
John Buxton Hilton, Broadstairs.
Susanne Knowles, Kensington.
Enid Norman, Weston-super-Mare.
Wilrich Price, Swansea
Alan Randall, Co. Down.
Edith Roseveare, S.W. 16.
Alan Smithies, Staffs.
Lois Vaughan Thomas, Strasbourg.

IMPASSE

The rain is falling in my heart,
Breaking the hearts of broken flowers,
Raining in through the missing tiles
All night through the unnumbered hours.

The wind is crying through my heart,
Bitter and full of dying leaves.
My coat is threadbare and worn thin
Because my heart no more believes.

Never a soul to cross the ways,
Deeper the pools in every street;
The doors are shut, the windows dark,
And silence where the crossroads meet.

The leaves are dying in my heart
And all the trees are white with frost:
The sequel of a year of grief
Because I need the truth I lost.

RALPH SHALLIS.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE POETRY SOCIETY: LECTURES

It has been suggested at the General Executive Council to invite any persons interested and willing to become lecturers to communicate direct with the Secretary, The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, W.1.

CENTRES

THE BATH POETRY CLUB

Enquiries to: James Angell, Esq., Pucklewood, Lumpley-Stoke, Nr. Bath, Somerset.

THE BOSTON POETRY CENTRE

Meetings held monthly. Full details from: Miss Blanche J. Bigelow, 163 Eliot Street, Milton 87, Mass.

THE BRIGHTON AND HOVE POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to the Honorary Secretary and Treasurer: Mrs. T. Weston Ramsey, 89 Poplar Avenue, Hove.

Fixtures every third Saturday in the month at the Glenside Hotel, 65 Grand Parade, Brighton. Readings at 3.15 until 5.30 p.m. Tudor Café attached. Refreshments if desired.

At the September meeting Miss Marjorie Hillier, L.G.S.M., A.T.C.L., and other members, gave readings from Victorian poets.

President: Rev. F. Pratt Green, 25 West Drive, Brighton 7.

THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE CENTRE

November 10th, 3.0 p.m. *An Hour with Browning*. Miss Joan Eastman, St. Bernard's Convent, High Wycombe.

December 8th, 3.0 p.m. *The Weird in Poetry*. Mrs. E. W. Ward, Kynance, Manor Road, Penn. 2177.

THE CHELSEA POETRY CIRCLE

(Affiliated to the Poetry Society. Formed 1946)

President: Dame Sybil Thorndike

Vice-President: Miss Margaret Rawlings

Informal readings are held each month in members' homes, and occasional public readings at the National Trust Museum, 3 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, S.W.3. Full particulars from the *Hon. Secretary*, John E. Carroll, 5 Redesdale Street, S.W.3.

THE CHICAGO CENTRE

Founders:
Josephine Hancock Logan.
Grace Patterson Lopez-Diaz.
V-Ps. of The Poetry Society (London).

President:
Ruth Crary Clough,
St. Clair Hotel,
Chicago 11, Ill., U.S.A.

Founded in 1940, monthly luncheon meetings are held the year around at Lewis Towers, 820 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A. Luncheon is followed by anonymous written criticism of poems submitted anonymously. Out of town members in California, Idaho, Washington, D.C., etc., participate in the monthly assignments and are mailed copies of the poem criticisms.

THE EALING POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to: The Secretary, 3 Grafton Road, Acton, W.3.

THE FLORIDA POETRY CENTRES

(Formed 1920)

President General:
Marie Tello Phillips,
6427 Darlington Rd.,
Pittsburgh 17, Pa., U.S.A.

THE GUILDFORD POETRY CENTRE

Details of meetings may be obtained from The Centre Secretary, Mrs. F. E. Coker, 20 Litchfield Way, Guildford, Surrey.

The Centre brought to an end its programme for the Festival of Britain with a recital by Roberta Shuttleworth, which covered "The Land", "The Seasons" and "The People" of our islands. She was assisted by Rene Cohen, Francine Holton, Audrey Cole and others. It was a never-to-be-forgotten meeting and all thanks are tended by everyone to Miss Shuttleworth for the thought and care she had taken in the compilation of such a memorable programme.

THE HAMPSTEAD POETRY CENTRE (1909)

Meetings are held on the first and third Thursdays in each month at 8–9.30 p.m., at 9 Wentworth Mansions, Keats Grove, N.W.3, and the following Programme has been arranged:

November 15th. On Music.
December 6th. The Home and Family.
December 20th. No Meeting.

THE LEEDS POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to: Peter Bailey, 49 Cross Flatts Parade, Beeston, Leeds, 11.

THE LEWES POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to the Secretary and Treasurer: G. C. Price, 22 Sutton Road, Seaford, Sussex.

Meetings are held in the Friends' Meeting House, Lewes.

THE MANCHESTER POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to the Secretary: Mrs. B. Sterling, 25 June Street, Manchester, 13. Meetings are held at the Midland Hotel, the third Wednesday in each month at 6.30 p.m.

THE NORTHERN IRELAND POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to: Miss H. Haddock, 18 Ashley Gardens, Belfast.
November 19th: Scenes and Songs from Shakespeare, arranged by Edith Mathews.

THE NOTTINGHAM POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to: Lake Aske, Esq., 281 Wilford Lane, Nottingham.

THE REIGATE POETRY CENTRE

Details of Meetings may be obtained from the Centre Secretary, Mrs. M. A. Hicks, The Alton, Alma Road, Reigate.

THE ST. PETERSBURG (U.S.A.) CENTRE
(Formed 1946)

Members and potential members are invited to communicate with the President, Helen T. Douglas Robinson, 815 Jackson Street North, St. Petersburg, 6, Florida. The Centre seeks to promote production of the best in poetry.

SHEFFIELD POETRY CLUB

Enquiries should be sent to: Miss F. G. Stimpson, 23 Silver Hill Road, Sheffield, 11.

THE SOUTHAMPTON POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to: Miss Joy Brider, 9 Archers Road, Southampton.

THE STROUD CENTRE

For particulars of Membership, please apply to the Hon. Secretary of the Stroud Poetry Centre at Steanbridge, Slad, Nr. Stroud.

THE WALTON AND WEYBRIDGE POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to: Mrs. Elsie M. Gittens, 28 Oatlands Drive, Weybridge, Surrey.

Meetings are held at 28 Oatlands Drive, Weybridge (near Walton Bridge) the fourth Thursday in each month at 8 p.m. Mr. Wilfrid Gibson has recently accepted the Presidency of the Centre.

Will anyone able and willing to start a Centre in any part of the country please communicate with the Secretary, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1.

POETS' GROUP OF THE POETRY SOCIETY

This Group, dedicated to furthering the work of active Poets within the Society, gathers "to hear each other's work and discuss the spirit and substance of poetry." All interested in attending future meetings are invited to communicate with me at The Well House, Ewell, Surrey. LEIGH HENRY.

THE POETRY SOCIETY'S CRITICAL SERVICE

The Poetry Society has pleasure in announcing the continuance of its Critical Service for Members. Two poems only may be submitted for criticism, for a minimum fee of 5s.

THE POETRY SOCIETY'S AUDITIONS AND EXAMINATIONS

The Poetry Society has conducted auditions and examinations in the art of verse-speaking for many years, and its success in this valuable cultural activity is attested by the fact that the number of schools and institutions in all parts of England which the Society examines, continually increases.

Junior preliminary examinations are available for the youngest children and these continue through various grades, up to the final test for adult students, for which the Society's gold medal is the final award for success.

General regulations governing these auditions may be obtained on application to The Registrar, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, with whom arrangements can be made for auditions for schools, colleges, or private individuals.

COMPETITIONS

THE GREENWOOD COMPETITIONS FOR 1951

The Poetry Society is empowered by the executors of the late Mrs. Julia Wickham Greenwood to offer the sum of £20 as the Shirley Carter Greenwood Prize for the best single poem in open competition.

Entries should be addressed "The Greenwood Prize", 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Only one poem may be submitted by any one competitor, the length not to exceed 250 lines; no previously published poem may be entered. The full name and address of the author must be given and a stamped addressed envelope enclosed if return of the poem is desired. If a nom-de-plume is adopted, name and address of sender must be given in a closed envelope bearing the pseudonym. The winning poem will be printed in *The Poetry Review* and may be reprinted at the discretion of the Editor, who may also reserve near winners for publication in *The Poetry Review*.

Closing date is 31st December, 1951.

THE PREMIUM COMPETITION

The above bi-monthly competition continues as before with the total entrance fees as prize money which may be won outright by a single competitor or may be divided at the discretion of the Premium Adjudicator. An entrance fee of 2s. 6d. will be charged, and a stamped addressed envelope should be enclosed if a receipt is desired. Competitors must observe the following rules:

1. One poem only may be entered by each competitor.
2. The poem must be typed and no stamped addressed envelope will be required unless a receipt is desired. (See Rule 3.)

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3. Competitors must retain copies of their poems, as none can be returned.
4. Entries must be addressed "Premium Competition", *The Poetry Review*, 33 Portman Square, W.1.
5. Each poem must bear the author's name and address.
6. Entrants must be members of the Poetry Society or regular subscribers to *The Poetry Review*.
7. The winner of a full Premium or one who has shared the prize twice will not be eligible for re-entry for twelve months.
8. No previously published poem may be entered.

The closing date for the next Premium Competition will be December 15th, 1951.

THE HOWARD PARSONS' EPIGRAM COMPETITION: 1952

The Poetry Society is empowered by Mr. Howard Parsons, a long-standing member of the Society, to offer the following prizes, endowed by him for an Epigram Competition.

1st prize, 5 guineas; 2nd prize, 2 guineas; 3rd prize, 1 guinea. Entries which should not have been previously published should be marked "Epigram" and should not bear a stamped addressed envelope as MSS. cannot be returned. They should be addressed to The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, to reach here not later than 1st March, 1952. The Society reserves the right to extend the closing date of the competition should none of the entries reach the required standard.

THE LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS SONNET COMPETITION FOR 1952

The Poetry Society has the pleasure of announcing the fourth Annual Competition in memory of Lord Alfred Douglas for a sonnet upon any subject. One of the two forms adopted by Lord Alfred Douglas in his sonnets, must be used; these are:

For the Octave — 1, 2, 2, 1; 1, 2, 2, 1.

For the Sextet — 3, 4, 5; 3, 4, 5 *or* 3, 4; 3, 4; 3, 4.

The prize of £10 may be divided at the discretion of the adjudicator; the winning poem or poems will be published with the award in *The Poetry Review*. Competitors must retain copies of their poems as these cannot be returned. The sonnets should bear a definite title and not merely marked "Sonnet". Not more than two sonnets may be submitted by each competitor by 30th June, 1952. Address "Sonnet Competition", The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Entries should bear names and addresses of competitors. No previously published poem may be entered.

THE POETRY SOCIETY JUNIOR VERSE COMPETITION

The Poetry Society have pleasure in announcing the next annual Junior Verse Competition. Schools throughout the country are invited to co-operate in submitting the work of their pupils.

The Competition will be divided into two classes:

(*a*) Not more than one poem, previously unpublished, to be submitted by any one competitor, age up to thirteen years last birthday. There will be a book prize inscribed by the Poetry Society.

(*b*) Not more than one poem, previously unpublished, to be submitted by any one competitor, age from fourteen to seventeen years last birthday. There will be a book prize, inscribed by the Poetry Society and four additional prizes of one year's Membership to the Poetry Society.

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SUBMISSIONS TO THE EDITOR

Manuscripts may be submitted to the Editor, THE POETRY REVIEW, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, for consideration in the ordinary way apart from entries for competitions. Such MSS. should be typewritten, or if this is impossible, printed legibly, and if their return is desired must be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope. The Editor can accept no responsibility for the safety of MSS. although every care will be taken to ensure this. Acceptance will not imply immediate publication; payment will be made upon publication.

THE POETRY SOCIETY : JUNIOR MEMBERSHIP

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